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Why do Children go to School?

A Case Study of Primary Education in Hawassa, Ethiopia

by

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to an understanding of why children in urban Ethiopia and elsewhere go to school by accounting for children in one Ethiopian city's own explanations of their educational participation, and examining the factors shaping these understandings.

The findings demonstrate that, for children in this context, education was both an indicator of a 'good' childhood, and the route to social adulthood. Children in Hawassa wanted to go to school in order to become good workers, good people and good national citizens. Their motivations for going to school often overlapped with dominant arguments for the expansion of education, but went beyond the narrow economic instrumentalism of the human capital approach and challenged the neoliberal individualism that has underpinned much work on human capabilities. The thesis therefore asserts the important contribution that children can make to debates about the purposes of education. However, it also demonstrates that children's explanations of their schooling were constrained by the discourses and understandings available to them. It argues that children had largely internalised a deficit model of childhood and education that inhibited the expansion of their critical capabilities.

In demonstrating the constraints upon children's understandings, the thesis also demonstrates that educational participation in Hawassa was not solely the outcome of children's rational evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with going to school. However, it does not instead present attendance as resulting from compulsion or normativity. Rather, it argues that going to school was an act of agency that arose from children's ultimate human concerns, and was constrained and enabled by external 'generative mechanisms' (Bhaskar 1978). These mechanisms included discourses about the morality and power of education, economic structures rendering school attendance necessary for the achievement of desired indicators of adulthood, and government strategies seeking to minimise civil conflict and dissent.

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Abbreviations

ABE	Alternative basic education
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AMWCY	African Movement of Working Children and Youth
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
CSA	Central Statistics Agency
DfID	(UK) Department for International Development
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
EFA	Education for All
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
ETP	Education and Training Policy
EU	European Union
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NER	Net enrolment ratio
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SNNPR	Southern Nationals, Nationalities and Peoples' Region
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
UEDF	United Ethiopian Democratic Forces
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDHR	UN Declaration of Human Rights

UNESCO	United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal primary education

Declaration

This thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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&

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Statement of problematic

This thesis contributes to current knowledge about why children go to school by exploring children in urban Ethiopia's own explanations of their engagement in formal education. It considers the extent to which the reasons that children attending primary school in Hawassa, Ethiopia gave for going to school and the outcomes that they expected to arise from their education were consistent with the arguments for the expansion of formal education relied upon in contemporary development discourse. In particular, it considers how far children's accounts of their education went beyond human capital understandings of education as an investment in human beings as economic production factors. Drawing on a critical realist understanding of human agency, it also examines the 'ultimate' moral concerns and external generative mechanisms including culture, infrastructure and global structures of power that underpinned these children's motivations for going to school. Using notions of individual and collective capabilities, it considers the extent to which children's narratives about their education suggested that going to school in Hawassa was contributing to human development and freedom.

1.2 Background

To ask why children go to school is to ask a simple, but often taken for granted question. In development discourse and planning, for example, it is widely accepted that children should go to school. The expansion of primary education in particular has been central to contemporary development agendas, and as

we enter the 'post-2015' era in development, achieving universal primary education [UPE] continues to be promoted as the route to national and international progress and the prosperity and well-being of individuals and their families (see for example Save the Children, 2012; UNESCO, 2012). However, although UPE might have been agreed upon as a worthwhile objective, there is significantly less consensus about what that universal education should look like and what its purpose should be. For instance, human capital thinkers have understood education as an investment in a nation's productivity (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2007, Schultz, 1961), whilst human capabilities theorists have emphasised the role of education in fostering individual and collective freedoms (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1997). Human rights theorists, meanwhile, have emphasised the intrinsic value of education in and for itself (Spring, 2000; Wringe, 1986; see also UN, 1948; UN 1989).

In recent decades the 'new' sociology of childhood has asserted children's capacity and entitlement to participate in knowledge production (Boyden, 2009, James and James, 2004, James et al., 1998, James and Prout, 1997, Wyness, 2000). However, conversations about why children should go to school have almost entirely taken place among adult academics, practitioners and policy makers, reflecting a widespread exclusion of children from public discourse and decision-making. This exclusion is based upon flawed, yet dominant, notions of children as universally apolitical, immature and in need of adult protection, provision and guidance. Recognising that children are the key stakeholders in and supposed beneficiaries of education policy, and affirming children's

competency and entitlement to participation in debates and decision-making that directly affect their lives, this research therefore seeks to demonstrate the importance of including children in the debates about the purposes and functions of their education discussed above. It addresses a significant gap in current knowledge about why children should go to school by exploring the reasons that children attending primary schools in one Ethiopian city gave for going to school, and considers the ways in which these children's explanations of their school attendance and participation overlapped with, added to and challenged the above hypotheses about why children should go to school in this context and more generally.

Asking why children go to school not only includes considering why children *should* go to school, but also what leads them to do so. In the context of the drive towards UPE that has already been mentioned, researchers, policy makers and theorists have sought to understand how children who do attend school come to do so and, conversely, what prevents other children from doing the same. By and large, explanations of how children come to be in school have assumed that children go to school because adults send them, based on the assumptions about children's passivity and lack of competency discussed above. Such explanations can be categorised according to three theories of children's school attendance; namely those of compulsion, of economic rationality and of normativity. The first assumes that children go to school because their families are legally compelled to ensure that they do so (Blacktop and Blyth, 1999; DFID, 2011). The second, in contrast, argues that parents do not send children to

school because they have no other choice, but because they decide that this is the *best* choice, based on a rational, economic assessment of the costs and benefits of children's participation in education as opposed to other activities, such as domestic or paid work (Baland and Robinson, 2008; Basu and Van, 1998; Burke and Beegle, 2004). Thirdly, the theory of normativity understands children and childhood as sites of social construction, and asserts that families enroll their children in education because school has been established as the appropriate arena for children, and thus this behavior has become the 'normal' thing for children to do (Boyden, 1997; Prout, 2005).

The 'new' sociology of childhood has challenged these orthodox accounts of children's educational participation by highlighting the fact that children are not simply passive followers of their parents' wishes, but active participants and decision-makers in their everyday lives (Boyden, 2009; James and James, 2004; James and Prout, 1997; Wyness, 2000). The research discussed in this thesis draws upon these ideas to consider children not as simply subordinated to adults' decision-making with regard to their educational participation, but as themselves involved in the making of these choices. However, the idea of 'choice' is adopted cautiously here. Rather than resorting to the three models of decision-making discussed above, which depend on flawed understandings of human agency, the analysis in this thesis draws on a critical realist ontology in order to understand the multitude of factors interacting to lead to the observed phenomena of children's school attendance in Hawassa. Using conceptual tools from critical realism, the thesis constitutes an argument for the need to analyse

children's motivations for going to school as interdependent on structure and culture, and as emerging from children's interaction with these social forces as human beings with the capacity to form moral judgements and commitments. The analysis in Chapters Four to Seven takes children's educational participation not simply as the result of compulsion or normativity, nor of purely rational, economic decision-making, but as an act of agency dependent both on children's 'ultimate' or moral concerns as a pushing force (Archer, 2000), and on external enabling and constraining structures or 'generative mechanisms' (Bhaskar, 1978; Sayer, 2000). It asks what it was that children cared about that was leading them to go to school, and which 'generative mechanisms' in the form of cultural, material, institutional and relational structures were encouraging children in Hawassa to commit themselves to formal education.

In examining the discourses and structures in which children's understandings and motivations were rooted, the thesis also seeks to critically evaluate children's explanations of their education. Human beings' knowledge and actions are constrained by the understandings available to them (Sayer, 2000), and people tend to adapt their preferences and subjective evaluations in line with their current circumstances (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 2002a). The analysis in this thesis therefore seeks to assess whether the functions that children in Hawassa ascribed to their education were in their true interests. Using ideas from the capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen and others, it considers whether children's accounts of their education suggested that primary education in Hawassa was fostering human development. This human

development is defined as the expansion of the functionings available to people, and thus the increasing of the freedom and capability that they – as individuals and as members of collectives – have to achieve lives that they have reason to value (Biggeri, 2007; Evans, 2002; Ibrahim, 2006; Sen, 1999, 2002a).

1.3 Why Ask Why Children in Hawassa, Ethiopia go to School?

Debates about why children should and do go to school are particularly relevant in sub-Saharan Africa, where participation rates continue to lag behind the rest of the world, and where education is often of poor quality and questionable relevance to the children's lives (Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; Poulsen, 2006; Roschanski, 2007; Rose and Dyer, 2008). Ethiopia is a country that exemplifies both investment and belief in education and its promised outcomes, and these problems and challenges that arise with expanded educational provision. The country therefore provides an extremely interesting and pertinent case study through which to explore questions about why children should or should not, and do or do not, go to school. In contrast to the majority of research about children and childhoods in Ethiopia, which has focused either on the rural context in which the majority of Ethiopian children live or on childhoods in the capital city of Addis Ababa, this research examined an urban context outside of the capital; a relatively under-researched but increasingly common context for Ethiopian childhoods.

As well as these methodological justifications for conducting the research in an Ethiopian city, the choice of case study location arose from my own personal and academic biography. My intellectual interest in childhood and education

began in sub-Saharan Africa, after spending time on the continent with both children and adults who seemed to invariably portray education as the answer to their problems. Interrogating my own instincts about the value of education, I came to question the purpose of education not only in these contexts, but more universally: Why go to school? What was education for? These are questions that I have considered throughout my academic career.

After analysing progress towards UPE in sub-Saharan Africa in my undergraduate dissertation, I began to question why children were so absent from these debates that directly affected their lives. This led me to the 'new' sociology of childhood, with its emphasis on children's voice and agency. In accordance with that paradigm, in my Masters thesis I conducted qualitative research with schoolchildren in Ghana, examining their understandings of their own education and considering how these understandings corresponded with orthodox arguments for the expansion of formal education. However, having conducted this interpretivist research exploring the meanings and aspirations expressed by individual children, I felt the need to transcend such interpretivist understanding, in order to come to a more comprehensive and critical appreciation of the structures interacting with and upholding and/or constraining children's individual concerns. This constituted the main impetus for this research.

1.4 Research Questions

The research discussed in this thesis investigated the following research question:

In the urban African context of Hawassa, Ethiopia, what motivates children to go to school, and to what extent do children's explanations of their schooling correspond with dominant arguments for universal primary education?

This overarching question gave rise to a number of issues for enquiry:

- Q1 *What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school, and what do they expect to gain from their education?*
- Q2 *To what extent are these reasons for going to school consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses about the purposes and value of education?*
- Q3 *What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?*
- Q4 *To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?*

1.5 Programme of Research and Thesis Structure

The above research questions were answered through a sustained programme of original research with children attending primary schools in Hawassa, Ethiopia that examined the key motivations and concerns leading children in this context to want to go to school, combined with participant observation, interviews with teachers and critical analysis of education policy and curricula and educational and economic statistics that sought to identify the generative mechanisms shaping children's understandings and behaviours. Findings and

conclusions from this research are presented according to the following structure.

Chapter Two: *Current knowledge about why children go to school* reviews the existing literature relevant to the research questions addressed by this thesis. First, it appraises currently accepted knowledge about why children *should* go to school in this context and around the world, including conceptions of education as an investment in human capital, basic needs, and human capabilities, and as a fundamental human right. It also considers critical contributions that have questioned the status of education as an unequivocal ‘good’. The chapter then assesses existing explanations of why children actually *do* – or indeed do not – attend school. Emphasising the importance of the ‘new’ sociology of childhood’s recognition of children as competent actors and decision-makers, it nonetheless demonstrates the limits of current understandings of children’s agency in explaining why children go to school. To this end, the chapter therefore introduces the ideas of critical realism, and considers the ways in which this theoretical approach might assist in our quest to understand what leads children to go to school. It also introduces the human capabilities approach as the framework through which this thesis will evaluate children’s claims about their education and reasons for going to school.

Chapter Three: *The Methodology* describes and justifies the methodological approach adopted in order to answer the research questions set out above. It details the access and sampling strategies employed and describes the participatory focus groups, interviews and child conferences conducted in

Hawassa in order to uncover children's motivations for going to school.

Following this, the chapter outlines the methods employed in order to analyse the generative mechanisms shaping children's understanding and actions and evaluate their motivations for going to school, including participant observation of life in Hawassa, interviews with teachers and analysis of official statistics and government policy. This discussion also details how the two elements of the research were brought together in a thematically guided analysis, and provides a reflexive account of ethical issues encountered during the project.

Chapter Four: *Going to school in the EPRDF's Ethiopia* reviews the policies and legal strategies that the Ethiopian government has employed in order to get more children into school, and considers the ways in which these strategies were encouraging school attendance among children growing up in the city of Hawassa (Q3). It examines the ways in which these policies were rooted in global as well as national forms of governance, and reflected changing international priorities with regards to education and development policy.

Chapter Five: *Going to school to get a job* explores the employment-related reasons that children in Hawassa gave for going to school (Q1). The chapter considers the extent to which children's narratives about going to school to become productive workers affirmed or challenged existing, accepted knowledge about why children go to school, particularly relating to notions of human capital and human capabilities (Q2). It then analyses the moral, material, cultural, structural and institutional factors encouraging children in Hawassa to value certain career paths, and to invest in education as the key to getting these

jobs, and considers how these motivations relate to ideas of economic rationality, normativity and human agency (Q3). Finally, the chapter examines the forms of 'development' that the Ethiopian education system is preparing children to contribute to, and considers whether these employment-related functions of schooling are of merit if we take development to mean the expansion of children's freedom to live lives that they have reason to value (Q4).

Chapter Six: *Going to school to become a good person* explores children in Hawassa's assertion that they went to school to become good people as well as good workers (Q1). It considers the extent to which children's belief that they needed to go to school in order to improve their behaviour and morality and to be able to help others confirmed and/or challenged existing theories about the role of education in the global South (Q2). The chapter examines the ways in which children's ultimate, human concerns were interacting with external generative mechanisms in order to lead them to commit to formal education as the route to becoming a good person in their own eyes and in the eyes of others (Q3). Finally, the chapter questions whether children should be attending school in order to become (seen as) good people, and whether schools are empowering children to become the people that they want to be or rather constraining them to a certain moral framework that is not in their interest (Q4).

Chapter Seven: *Going to school to develop Ethiopia* addresses the motivations for attending school expressed by children in Hawassa not in relation to their

own interests and those of their families, but in terms of the anticipated benefits for their country (Q1). It considers the ways in which these motivations for going to school add to, confirm, or challenge currently accepted understandings of why children do and should attend school in this urban Ethiopian context (Q2), and analyses the cultural, structural and institutional factors encouraging children in Hawassa to be so committed to the national cause, and to believe that formal education was the route to national as well as personal progress (Q3). Finally, the chapter seeks to evaluate these reasons motivating children to go to school, considering the specific type of 'citizen' that the Ethiopian government are seeking to produce through the formal education system, and questioning whether schools in Hawassa were expanding individual and collective freedoms, or acting as institutions of manipulation and oppression (Q4).

Chapter Eight: *Conclusions* presents a final summary of what this research has told us about why children in Hawassa and elsewhere should and do go to school. It reviews participants' explanations of why they went to school (Q1), and considers what these add to existing, accepted understandings of the role of education in society (Q2). The chapter summarises the generative mechanisms identified as encouraging children to commit to education in contemporary, urban Ethiopia, and explains how these mechanisms interacted with children's ultimate, moral concerns about becoming good workers, good people and good citizens (Q3). Finally, it examines the kinds of futures – personal and national – that education in Hawassa was preparing its students

for, and asks whether children's narratives indicated that going to school was constraining or expanding their individual and collective freedoms (Q4).

Chapter Two: Current ‘knowledge’ about why children go to school

2.1 Introduction

As detailed in Chapter One, the research discussed in this thesis contributes to existing knowledge about why children go to school by exploring children in Hawassa, Ethiopia’s explanations of their own school attendance. Asking why children go to school involves both a consideration of why children *should* be attending school, or what the purposes of education should be, and an exploration of how and why children who *are* in school come to be there. This chapter reviews the literature that has attempted to answer these questions, both with regard to an Ethiopian and wider African context, and universally.

The chapter begins with a review of different understandings of the purposes and value of formal education. First, this review considers the somewhat contradictory but not entirely mutually exclusive arguments for the expansion of education that are relied upon in mainstream development discourse, and which have stemmed from different conceptions of ‘development’. The discussion concentrates on the reasons that proponents of these different approaches have given for proposing that children should go to school, and what they have understood the role of education in individual and collective progress and ‘development’ to be. Divergent contributions from the sociologies of childhood and education are then considered. These fields of study have explored children’s school attendance as part of the social construction of ‘childhood’ and of ‘imagined’ nation states, and have thus questioned whether children really should go to school.

Reviewing these debates about why children should – or indeed should not – go to school highlights the fact that although children are the people most affected by the forms and purposes that education takes, they have been largely missing from these conversations. The chapter therefore turns to considering the arguments made in the ‘new’ sociology of childhood regarding the epistemological and ethical impetus for facilitating children’s participation in knowledge production and decision-making directly affecting their lives. It asks if and why, on the basis of this evidence and theorising, children should be involved in conversations about if and why they should go to school.

Following this, the theories and assumptions that currently dominate discussions about how children actually end up attending – or indeed not attending – school are appraised. Reviewing these discussions reveals that children’s school attendance has primarily been understood as a result of compulsion, of rational, economic decision making or of normativity and social construction. Although contradicting and challenging each other, these explanations of children’s school attendance have for the most part shared the assumption that children go to school as a result of adults’ understandings and actions. On the other hand, proponents of the ‘new’ sociology of childhood have argued that children are actors and decision makers in their own right. The discussion in this chapter considers the usefulness and limits of this recognition of children’s ‘agency’ in relation to understanding their school attendance. It considers the ways in which the ontology of critical realism might facilitate a

more nuanced and holistic understanding of children's understandings of their education and motivations for going to school.

Finally, the chapter introduces critical realist arguments about the inevitability and desirability of making judgements in social research. In acknowledgement of the constraints upon children's knowledge and understanding, the discussion considers how critical realism and the human capabilities approach might together provide a framework through which to evaluate children's claims about their education and their reasons for going to school.

2.2 Why should children go to school? The accepted role(s) of education in personal and national progress

The praises of education are sung loud and clear in contemporary development discourse, with the achievement of universal primary education [UPE] in particular almost unanimously agreed on as a worthy goal. Since the pronouncement in the UN Declaration of Human Rights [UNDHR] in 1948 that primary education must be free and compulsory (UN, 1948), numerous commitments have been made to the provision of UPE, including in recent decades the international Education for All [EFA] goals and the second and third Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] (UNESCO, 1990; 2000; UN, 2000). Going forward into the Post-2015 era, education remains high on the international development agenda (Save the Children, 2012; UNESCO, 2012).

It is widely believed, then, that children *should* go to school. Indeed, as Alison Wolf has noted, the 'goodness' of education is so widely accepted that 'questioning the automatic value of any rise in [a nation's] education budget'

can lead one to be assumed either ignorant or malevolent (Wolf, 2002: xi). However, this assumption *does* need questioning. Moreover, although it is widely agreed that children should go to school, there is less consensus about *why* this is the case. In sub-Saharan Africa, where at the turn of the century ‘scarcely half’ of children of school age were attending school (Colclough, 2004: 166), where the quality of education is often less than desirable and where participation rates continue to lag behind the rest of the world, this question is particularly pertinent.

For some, education is intrinsically valuable. Access to education has been asserted as a basic human need (ODI, 1978) and a human right, including in the UN Declaration of Human Rights [UNDHR] and Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] (UN 1948; UN 1989; see discussion in McCowan, 2011; Roschanski, 2007). The human rights approach to education contends that children around the world should go to school because having access to education is a fundamental and universal human right (Spring, 2000; Wringe, 1986). In this approach children are not understood as the means to achieving some ultimate goal, but ‘as the ultimate ends of moral and political concerns’ themselves (Robeyns, 2006: 75). It is consequently argued that equitable distribution of education is in itself a matter of social justice, regardless of its outcomes (Birdsall and Londoño, 1998; Colclough *et al.*, 1997). However, in development discourse, education is predominantly appreciated for its instrumental value. That is, education is expected to cultivate progress and ‘development’, be it personal, national or global. Consequently, the role and

functions that people attribute to education vary according to the form of development or progress that they aspire towards. The following discussion reviews the main arguments made for the expansion of education in contemporary development research and policy, and considers what these theories suggest about why children should go to school.

2.2.1 Education and human capital

Since 'development' has traditionally been taken to mean national economic progress (Rostow, 1960; Sapsford, 2008), the role of education in development has typically been understood as to produce the educated labour force needed to create that economic growth (see for example Smith, 1976/1776). Since the 1960s, mainstream development thought has largely been influenced by a human capital model of education, which 'considers education relevant in so far as education creates skills and helps to acquire knowledge that serves as an investment in the productivity of the human being as an economic production factor' (Robeyns, 2006: 72). The antithesis of the human rights approach to education, this model proposes that children in the global South should go to school in order for their nations to be endowed with the human capital, labour productivity and diversified export profile necessary to escape poverty and 'modernise' by attracting international investment, avoiding brain drain and promoting economic growth (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2007; Schultz, 1961). The theory of human capital is particularly asserted in relation to the needs of 'developing' economies. Theodore Schultz, the originator of the approach, attributed the economic success of 'developed' nations such as the US in a large part to these nations' investment in people, and asserted that other countries

needed to do the same if they were to achieve the same levels of wealth, arguing that ‘it simply is not possible to have the fruits of a modern agriculture and the abundance of modern industry without making large investments in human beings’ (Schultz, 1961: 16). This idea remains persistent, with the United Nations for example asserting that ‘both villages and cities can become part of global economic growth if they are empowered with the infrastructure and human capital to do so’ (UNMP, 2005: 15), and with new technologies, a transition from agricultural to industrial production and the development of the service sector – all requiring an educated workforce – being central to the development strategies of many nations in the Global South, including Ethiopia (see for example MoE, 2010).

Human capital theorists anticipate that, as well as producing *educated* workers, education will boost the productivity of the population by producing *healthy* workers (Mushkin, 1962; Schultz, 2002; Schultz, 1961; UNMP, 2005). It is expected that education will improve the health of a population by endowing individuals with knowledge about health requirements, basic hygiene and disease prevention, as well as with the skills that they need in order to be able to access and make use of modern health care provision. In particular, investing in the education of women has been identified as ‘the single best way to curb population growth’, and as key in reducing maternal, infant and child mortality rates (Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006: 293). Specifically, girls’ schooling is expected to reduce such mortality rates by promoting positive behaviours such as vaccination and fertility control, and by reducing the prevalence of

malnutrition among the next generation when those educated girls themselves become mothers to other children (Lay and Robilliard, 2009; UNICEF, 2004; World Bank, 2001). A 'virtuous circle' effected is also anticipated, in which income growth resulting from education further improves the health of a population, which in turn further increases its productivity (UNMP, 2005).

2.2.2 Education and basic needs

The human capital approach, then, suggests that children should go to school primarily in order to increase the productivity and wealth of their nation. Since the 1970s, however, critics of macroeconomic understandings of development have sought to refocus the debate on the lives of the poor, rather than the economies of 'developing' nations. The 'basic needs' approach launched at the 1976 ILO World Employment Conference conceptualised poverty as the failure to meet basic needs, and took 'development' to mean the eradication of this poverty (ILO, 1976; ODI, 1978; Streeten, 1977). In this approach to development, therefore, education is understood to be of value because it can enable people to (earn enough to) meet their own basic needs. Such basic needs include people's material requirements for food, water, shelter, clothing and so on, but also their psychological, emotional and relative human needs (ODI, 1978; Streeten, 1977). This basic needs model of development reflects the Post-Washington Consensus, which encourages some public provision including state investment in education and health services (Tikly and Barrett, 2011). This approach to development is defined in comparison to the Washington Consensus, which expected economies in the global South to be opened fully to market powers, and state intervention and spending rolled back in all areas

(Williamson, 2008). The basic needs approach therefore revolves around significantly different priorities to the human capital approach, and yet coexists with and does not directly challenge that dominant economic agenda, with regard to both the conceptualisation of development and the accepted role of education as an aid to market-led economic growth (Tikly and Barrett, 2011: 4). It argues that children should go to school in order to become educated and healthy workers, albeit to benefit themselves and their households rather than their national economies (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2007, Robeyns, 2006).

2.2.3 Education and human capabilities

More radically, in the decades since the popularisation of the basic needs approach, mainstream development conversations have also come to include ideas of empowerment and freedom, drawing in particular on the work of Amartya Sen and others in relation to 'human capabilities'. This approach provides an alternative to orthodox evaluations of quality of life that depend wholly on economic measures, often at national or regional levels, instead identifying human beings as 'the ends of economic activity rather than merely its means' and framing development in terms of what people are able and free to be and do (Biggeri *et al.* 2006: 63). A person's capability set is comprised of the functionings or 'beings and doings' that they are able to achieve, and their ability to live 'the kind of life he or she has reason to value' (Sen, 1999: 87). The key concept of 'conversion factors' highlights the fact that individual people will have differing abilities to convert given resources into desired functionings, and thus the evaluation of 'development' in this approach focuses on what people are actually able to do with the resources – for example public education or

monetary income – available to them, rather than the measurement of the resources themselves (Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006: 291). Conversion factors can be personal (for example levels of intelligence, skill and physical ability), environmental (including factors to do with geographical location and physical logistics), or social (including social norms and structures and relations of power (Robeyns, 2005: 99). At the same time, the approach's focus on freedom and autonomy, and particularly the recognition that people have varying conceptions of what is meant by a 'good life', encourages policy interventions that seek to expand people's capabilities rather than specific functionings or outcomes, and measures what people are able to do rather than what they actually do (Biggeri *et al.*, 2006; Walker, 2006).

The human capabilities approach was formally integrated into mainstream development measurement and theorising with the publication of the UN's first Human Development Report in 1990. This report began with a clear, apparently radical statement indicating that human development was a matter of expanding the choices available to people (UNDP, 1990). However, in practice, the development agendas of both governments in the South and of international agencies and donors continue to focus largely on growth and income, albeit growth with the 'add-ons' of public services and redistribution, which are to differing degrees rhetorical. Furthermore, the emphasis on individual choice and autonomy in Sen's human development approach is highly compatible with the individualism that underpins neoliberalism (Morrow, 2013).

Nonetheless, the capabilities approach does offer a distinctive view of the role of education in development. Firstly, although human capabilities theorists, like human capital thinkers, conceptualise education first and foremost as the means to something else, as evident in the proposal that children should attend school because 'being well-educated can [...] be instrumental for the expansion of other capabilities' (Robeyns, 2006: 78), they argue that having a job is just one of the many valued capabilities that going to school has the potential to expand for individuals. In addition to the ability to get a job, theorists expect many non-economic capabilities to be fostered by a good education, including the health-related capabilities discussed above (Robeyns, 2006, Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006), but also the ability to access information, to communicate with people around the world as a result of literacy and IT skills, to think critically, to aspire beyond one's circumstances and to participate in political processes (Nussbaum, 2000; Walker, 2005, 2006, Watts *et al.*, 2008). Second, some capabilities theorists *have* moved beyond the neoliberal individualism that characterises the human capital approach. Education is understood to be redistributive; addressing gendered inequalities in income and opportunities, for example (Tikly and Barrett, 2011: 7), and some theorists have particularly stressed the importance of collective as well as individual capabilities, including both the functionings made available to individuals by virtue of their membership of and engagement in a group, and the expanded functionings and well-being transferred to collectivities as a whole (Evans, 2002; Ibrahim, 2006; Stewart, 2005). With regard to education, theorists have argued that education can cultivate public debate, and have asserted that children

living in disadvantaged circumstances should go to school in order to gain the skills needed to organise politically and to obtain the collective resources necessary for debating the social structures that lead to their disadvantage (Tamene, 2007; Walker, 2006; Watts *et al.*, 2008). Such emphasis on collective capabilities has often arisen from a recognition that, particularly in the global South, 'the use and exercise of human capabilities usually takes place in a collective setting' (Ibrahim, 2006: 397). In addition, it has emerged as a direct critique of Sen's focus on the individual and their individual capability set, and his rejection of the idea that capabilities can be collective, or 'socially dependent' (see Sen, 2002: 85). Critics from within the approach have argued that Sen's individualist approach merely modifies capitalist and neoliberal strategies, without addressing the limitations that these frameworks themselves place on people's capabilities and freedoms (Carpenter, 2009).

The final way in which human capabilities theorists have deviated from the human capital model of education is that they have moved beyond its narrow instrumentalism to declare that children should go to school because being knowledgeable and having access to education are also intrinsically valuable universal or 'basic' capabilities in themselves (Biggeri, 2007: 197; Robeyns, 2006: 78; Sen, 1992: 4). This argument for educational participation is more in line with the human rights model of education discussed above than with orthodox, human capital understandings of the role and purpose of formal schooling.

2.2.4 Questioning education as an unequivocal good

Capabilities theorists have also stressed that it is only a certain kind of education that will expand children's freedom to live lives that they have reason to value, and that these goods will not automatically result from formal schooling (Nussbaum, 2006). Indeed, education can restrict as well as expand children's capabilities (Tikly, 2004; Walker, 2006; Watts *et al.*, 2008). For instance, Unterhalter (2003) has discussed how the gendered violence and exposure to HIV that girls in South Africa experienced in the hands of some male teachers and peers served to further marginalise them and restrict their ability to achieve valued functionings. Others have argued that formal schooling can discourage critical thinking, reinforce gender and generational norms that direct children and particularly girls to be quiet and submissive, and inhibit the capabilities of those children who lose confidence through academic 'failure' and other negative experiences at school (Nussbaum, 2006: 387; Tamene, 2007; Walker, 2006).

Although the dominant view of education seems to be 'the more the better', then, the assumption that all children should go to school *has* been challenged. The following discussion reviews arguments from the sociologies of childhood and education that have questioned the status of education as an unequivocal good, and instead presented formal schooling as an institution of social control that is potentially harmful to children.

First, education has been identified as an institution of 'generationing' (Mayall, 2002). In recent decades, sociologists have demonstrated that modern

conceptions of children and childhood are not natural, universal forms, but rather social constructs strengthened by claims to naturalism (Prout, 2005; Stephens, 1997; Watson, 2004). On the basis of evidence of children's capacity for making choices, taking on responsibilities and understanding the world around them, children's typical lack of power or observable 'agency' has been attributed to the fact that children are socially constructed into positions of relative powerlessness, rather than to their innate incompetency or weakness. Modern (Western) constructions of children have effectively erased children from history, rendering them powerless and thus overlooking where they have had and do have a profound impact on the world around them, for example as workers, soldiers, migrants, consumers, producers and participants in public life (Watson, 2004, 2006). At the same time, relational processes of 'generationing' mean that adults have the power to determine how far children are able to enact agency in the here and now (Mayall, 2002: 28, 174). The school provides a prime site for this generationing, or 'imaginative ideological labour' (Stephens, 1997: 5). The scholarisation of childhood in the global North – and more recently in the global South – has excluded children from the labour market and thus from participation and recognition in the 'adult' world (James and James, 2004; Prout, 2005; Wyness, 2000). Furthermore, it has located children within schools where they are to obey and accept wisdom from adults, thus further establishing and reproducing unequal power relations between adults and children (Devine, 2002; James *et al.*, 1998). The dominant 'banking model' of education, which has been critiqued by Freire (1972), positions (adult) teachers as active subjects who teach, know, choose and act, and (young) students as

merely the passive receptacles of deposited knowledge, entirely dependent upon their teachers for that knowledge. Formal education of this type marginalises and disempowers children by limiting their capacity for engagement with the world around them (Freire, 1972).

As well as marginalising the young, schools have been identified as institutions of class subordination (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). In contrast to the predominant presentation of the development of formal systems of education and the wider history of childhood itself as ‘a history of progress and enlightened reform’, moving towards ever more democratic and humane practices of provision, care and instruction, Marxist critics have argued that in fact education acts as an instrument of class domination, reproducing both capitalist relations and the hegemony of middle class cultural values (Humphries, 1981: 2). Historians of education in the Global North have noted that one of the primary factors underlying the creation of centralised, bureaucratic and compulsory education systems in the nineteenth century was a middle-class preoccupation with and desire to control what were perceived to be the inferior behaviours, values and child-rearing practices of the working classes (Johnson, 1970; Katz, 1976). The working class family was problematised, and thus primary schools in particular were promoted as a substitute for an ‘appropriate’ family for poor children (Johnson, 1970: 100). Going to school was conceptualised as providing disadvantaged children access to a superior environment and more preferable models of adult behaviour (Katz, 1976: 393), and although these motives were presented and perhaps in

some cases intended as philanthropic, schooling in fact reinforced a class hierarchy in both economic and social life. It enabled the elites to control the thoughts and behaviours of the lower classes, which they understood as posing a threat to the existing social order (Johnson, 1970).

Of direct relevance to this study, this concept of education as an institution of social control has also been observed on a global scale. During the colonial period, the creation of 'new political and economic organizations' depended upon 'the formation of social actors able and willing to function in complementary ways within them' (Stephens, 1995: 16), and education provided a tool for forming such actors. Formal schooling enforced and legitimised the superiority of the colonial master, cast indigenous people as 'subjects' rather than 'citizens', and promoted Eurocentric norms, values and ways of thinking as normal and correct (Tikly, 2004). Nowadays, in the postcolonial era, education continues to promote arguably Western values including individualism, competition and the capitalist profit motive. Moreover, the use of education, particularly at a basic level, as a measure and indicator of 'development' upon which aid and lending are conditional further reinforces power imbalances under the 'new imperialism', 'limiting the capacity of low-income countries to determine their own educational agendas' as well as further indebting governments in the South to governments and agencies of the North (Tikly, 2004: 190; see also Ansell, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010). At the same time, political elites in the postcolonial majority world 'have learned that in order to make internationally legitimated claims to political autonomy, they

must frame these claims in terms of bounded nation-states and distinctive national cultures' (Stephens, 1997: 10). Benedict Anderson (1983) coined the term 'imagined communities' in order to illustrate the ways in which nation states are created through political imagination and persuasion that emphasises internal similarity and external difference in order to manage subordinate populations. Theorists of education have observed that this political persuasion is particularly aimed at young people, who 'as representatives of the contested future and subjects of cultural policies', have minds and bodies 'at stake in debates about [...] ethnic purity, national identity, minority self-expression and self rule' (Stephens, 1995: 23). Schools are not neutral environments, but 'political as well as educational establishments' (Harber, 1991: 246). Although political indoctrination through schooling is said to be declining, political socialisation continues to take place in schools where 'preferences and predispositions' shape the environment and curriculum, and 'some values are taken more seriously and given more prominence than others' (Harber, 1991: 247-8). As will be argued throughout the rest of this thesis, the nation state of Ethiopia is a particularly contested 'imagined community', and education has been a key tool through which the imagining and managing of this federal nation state has taken place.

On the other hand, it cannot be assumed that children do not look to make their own ways within these constructs of childhood and nation, and structures of inequality. A key idea developed in the sociology of childhood is the notion that 'children are not only acted upon by adults, but also agents of political

change and cultural interpretation and exchange' (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007: 242; see also Staeheli and Hammett, 2010; Stephens, 1995). Theorists have disputed the idea that socialisation in schools is a one-way process, with children passively consuming moral, academic and vocational training, and have instead demonstrated the ways in which children negotiate their relations with adults and peers within the school (Blatchford, 1996; Kutnick and Jules, 1993; Mayall, 1996; Silcock and Wyness, 2000). With regard to nation-building processes in schools, research has explored the ways in which children and young people 'reinterpret and rework' concepts of nationhood and belonging and perform a range of different identities in different situations, while their experiences and ideas 'question the vaunted coherence of nationalist projects themselves' (Hart, 2002: 36, 42-43). Furthermore, it cannot be denied the building of one national identity can have positive outcomes. A shared national identity can help to enhance cohesion and overcome religious or ethnic divisions, for example (UNESCO, 2011). The expansion of formal schooling can minimise discord between social groups by addressing the uneven distribution of resources that often lead to civil conflict, as well as by increasing the 'opportunity costs' of going to war and by raising awareness of the economic and social costs of conflict (Dupuy, 2008). Socialisation at school can also build peace by rewarding norms and values of participation and cooperation rather than competition, and consequently has the potential to benefit the masses as well as elite groups (Dupuy, 2008).

It seems that it is not formal education *per se* that is harmful then, but the certain forms it has taken and the uses it has been employed for. Many – although certainly not all – critics of existing and past forms of education have proposed alternative forms and functions for formal provision that draw on the potential good of education. The emancipatory education paradigm, which has largely focused on adult education but is equally applicable to basic and further education for children and young people, argues that education can and should actively take the side of the oppressed, disadvantaged and powerless in order to disrupt the status quo and create a more informed, equal and just society (Martin, 2000; Thompson, 2000). Johnson, a key critic of educational policy as a historical tool of social control, did not condemn all education as detrimental. Instead, he asserted that education must be radically changed in order to foster ‘really useful knowledge’ (Johnson, 1979). ‘Really useful knowledge’ is knowledge that is created through the sharing of experiences and understandings, and which enables people to develop explanations of their struggles that in turn inform action and thus social change (Johnson, 1979; see also Thompson, 1997). Similarly, Freire (1972), who critiqued the pervasive ‘banking model’ of education, asserted that education could and should connect people to the world around them, by encouraging dialogue, critical thought and thus emancipation. One criticism of the push towards UPE is that scholars and policy makers have neglected the power and positive impact of learning that takes place in other arenas in children’s lives, for instance at work and play with other children and with adults (Boyden and Levison, 2001). However, the emancipatory education paradigm suggests that formal education can also play

a role in creating really useful knowledge, and therefore implies that children *should* go to school if and when this sort of education is in place. Then again, with governments having clear vested interests in maintaining the status quo, it seems that state-sponsored, mass education might never be truly emancipatory. These ideas will be pursued with specific reference to the Ethiopian context in Chapter Seven.

2.2.5 Something's missing: Listening to children about why they want to go to school

Common to the above arguments about why children should – or should not – go to school is the fact that discussions about the purposes and value of education have rarely included children, who are the principal users and supposed beneficiaries of education (Grover, 2004; Hill *et al.*, 2004). Development efforts intended to benefit children – including the drive towards UPE – are almost exclusively initiated, designed and evaluated by adults (Driskell *et al.*, 2001: 79; Morrow and Crivello, 2015), and likewise debates about why children should go to school have taken place in adult, academic circles. Although these adults' principles may well be well intentioned and indeed fit with children's priorities, they are based upon preconceptions about the nature of a 'good childhood', rather than children's own experiences (Reynolds *et al.*, 2006: 292). Education policy creation and agenda-setting will inevitably remain incomplete and misinformed until they are rooted in the realities experienced by those who schooling is supposed to benefit, and who spend large proportions of their time in school, rather than in adults' assumptions and expectations (Lloyd-Smith and Tarr, 2000).

The exclusion of children from these debates reflects a fundamental marginalisation of children in public discourse, which rests upon dominant yet fundamentally flawed notions of childhood as a universal, biologically determined life-stage, characterised by physical, cognitive and emotional immaturity, and of children as a valued but passive and burdensome sector of society, who are distinct from and subordinate to adults and particular in their need for protection and provision (Boyden, 2009; James *et al.*, 1998; Wyness, 2000). Such ideas arose in the twentieth century alongside the advancement of the child-saving philanthropic movement, child sciences such as developmental psychology and pediatrics and the seminal UNCRC and, combined with social changes such as the removal of children from paid work into schools, led to a boundary being drawn between childhood and adulthood (Boyden, 2009; Wyness, 2000). The UNCRC, for example, defines a 'child' as anyone under the age of eighteen (UN, 1989). Such assumptions have been critiqued in recent decades by a 'new' sociology of childhood, which asserts that children are able and entitled to produce valid knowledge about the worlds in which they live (James and James, 2004; James *et al.*, 1998; James and Prout, 1997; Wyness, 2000). Children and young people have demonstrated their ability to engage with research processes, understanding and addressing complex issues such as poverty, inequality and well-being, and discussing the ways in which these processes affect their own lives. For example, Camfield (2010) found Ethiopian children as young as five years old to be able to understand and address issues such as poverty, inequality and well-being, and to discuss the ways in which these processes affected their own lives. Biggeri (2007) and Walker (2006),

meanwhile, have facilitated children's theorising about the relevance and value of different capabilities for themselves and other young people, finding that children place value on a range of capabilities including being able to develop personal relationships, maintaining bodily integrity, having mental well-being, being safe, and having a religion and an identity (Biggeri, 2007; Walker, 2006). Other research has effectively explored young children's perceptions and experiences of education and the social relations and processes they engage in within the school (Blatchford, 1996; Boyden, 2013; Kutnick and Jules, 1993; Silcock and Wyness, 2000).

As well as being *capable* of contributing to education policy dialogues, it is further argued that children are *entitled* to do so. The right to participate in decision-making that affects their lives is emphasised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child alongside their right to protection and provision (UN, 1989). Furthermore, from a human rights perspective, research must enable and encourage young people's participation if it is to improve their social position (Campbell, 2008: 75). Moreover, social research - and education policies themselves - contribute to the construction of 'childhood' and thus on the basis of human rights and democracy research must give space to children 'to define themselves' rather than subjecting them to the assumptions and prescriptions of adults (Grover, 2004: 83).

On the basis of these threefold arguments for children's participation in research and agenda setting, this research address a significant gap in current understandings of why children should go to school by exploring the reasons

that children in one Ethiopian city gave for going to school and considering the extent to which these reasons were consistent or discordant with dominant policy discourses about the purposes and functions of formal education.

2.3 What leads children to go to school? Theories of compulsion, normativity and rationality in educational decision making

As well as considering what children in Hawassa's narratives about their education add to understandings about if and why children in Ethiopia *should* be attending school, this research investigates the factors shaping these children's motivations for engaging with formal education. The following discussion reviews currently accepted models of educational decision-making. These include the sometimes competing ideas that children go to school because they are legally compelled to do so, because they or – more frequently – their caregivers decide that the potential benefits of going to school outweigh the costs of doing so, and/or because going to school is the normatively accepted 'thing to do'. The discussion below explores the limits of each of these explanations, which have largely overlooked children as decision makers. It considers how a critical realist understanding of human agency might address the gaps in these current understandings of how children and their families come to 'choose' formal education.

2.3.1 Education and compulsion

One explanation given for children's school attendance in many areas of the world, and particularly in the global North, is that it is a matter of compulsion (Blacktop and Blyth, 1999; DFID, 2011). In England, for example, full time participation in formal education is mandatory for all children aged five to

sixteen, and young people are now legally required to remain in some form of education or training until their eighteenth birthday (GOV.UK, 2014), with increasingly severe penalties being introduced for parents who do not ensure that their dependents are in school (Donoghue, 2011). Participation in basic education has also begun to be made compulsory in many countries in the majority world, including in Ethiopia, where eight years of primary education is now the legal standard (MoE, 2010: 12). However, as is evident in the fact that universal enrolment remains an unattained target in the country (UNESCO, 2014), this law is rarely enforced. Furthermore, education has, as elsewhere, only been made legally compulsory in Ethiopia *after* most children have already begun attending school (Katz, 1976: 400). Indeed, by the time primary education was made compulsory in 2010, more than four in five children of school age were already enrolled in education (UNESCO, 2012). Katz' (1976) observation regarding the rapid expansion of mass formal education in 19th century North America thus also applies to the Ethiopian case;

[...] given its radical intrusion into the life-cycle and the relations between parents and children, the ease with which public education entered social life stands out as truly remarkable. Most people, by and large, did not need to be coerced to send their children to school.

(Katz, 1976: 400)

Why then, *do* children go to school? Who makes the decision, and what leads them to choose education? The following discussion reviews the ways in which

children's school attendance in Ethiopia and elsewhere has been understood and explained by researchers, theorists and policy makers.

2.3.2 Education and rational choice

The most common model of educational participation relied upon in mainstream discussions about how children in the majority world end up going to school is that adults – either parents or other household heads – decide whether the children for whom they are responsible should go to school based on a rational evaluation of the relative benefits of sending the children in their household to school or to work. Reflecting the dominance of economic understandings of human action in development theorising and research (see Morrow and Crivello, 2015), this cost-benefit assessment is for the most part envisioned in economic terms. Adults in the household are expected to weigh up the earnings that young members would contribute if they worked full time against the higher earnings that they expect to result from children's education in the future (Admassie, 2003; Baland and Robinson, 2008; Basu and Van, 1998; Burke and Beegle, 2004; Moore, 2001; Patrinos, 2002).

In Ethiopia, children's *non*-attendance has particularly been explained through this theory of parents' economically rational behaviour. Firstly, although government school fees have been abolished, school attendance still entails spending on uniforms, books and materials and – often – school meals or community contributions, and these direct costs have been identified as excluding children from poor households from education (UN-HABITAT, 2008; Woodhead, 2009). Second, much research has highlighted the 'opportunity

costs' of schooling that discourage attendance. For example, rates of drop-out spike in grade five, the level at which the government no longer guarantees a school in each community and so journeys to school become much longer, reducing the time that children can spend on domestic or economic labour. The 'problem' of the opportunity costs of schooling has particularly been highlighted in rural areas of Ethiopia (Camfield, 2011a: 396; Pereznieto and Jones, 2006). For households living in poverty, the need to pay for food, shelter and other necessities is said to outweigh any perceived benefits of education, and this is particularly apparent in rural areas where national policies promote labour-intensive agriculture. Parents in poor households are therefore expected not to send their children to school if it means that they are unable to work for the whole day (Poluha, 2007; UN-HABITAT, 2008). The rational decision-making model of educational participation is also apparent in 'supply-side' explanations of children's non-attendance that identify the standard of available education provision as hindering the achievement of universal primary education in Ethiopia. As will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis, unprecedented increases in Ethiopian enrolment are said to have led to a 'persistent decline of pedagogical conditions' since the early nineties (World Bank, 2005: xxiv). Indicators of this 'decline' include a failure to match the growth in student numbers with sufficient numbers of qualified teachers (Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; World Bank, 2009), huge increases in pupil-teacher ratios (MoE, 2010; Negash, 2006; World Bank, 2009) and a decline in real spending per pupil that has resulted in the use of poor quality classrooms and a lack of textbooks and other educational materials (Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; Woodhead, 2009;

World Bank, 2005, 2009). Whether it is parents and caregivers or the children themselves who are making enrolment and attendance decisions, it is argued that low perceptions of schools' quality – and thus of education's ability to result in productive employment – are leading to a devaluing of education and so are discouraging enrolment and continuation (Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; Roschanski, 2007; UNICEF, 2009; Woodhead, 2009).

The rational choice model of human decision-making underlies public policies that seek to improve the (perceived) quality of education so that parents and children have more faith in the gains to be achieved through schooling. It also underpins policies that seek to increase school enrolment and attendance simply by raising awareness of the deferred benefits that are already assumed by policy makers to arise from formal education (Buchmann, 2000). The model also constitutes the rationale for providing additional, immediate incentives for going to school, such as conditional cash transfers and school feeding programmes (Bourguignon *et al.*, 2003; Cardoso and Souza, 2004; Korugyendo and Benson, 2011; World Bank, 2012). Additionally, it provides the justification for outlawing children's participation in labour or other activities seen as 'alternative' uses of children's time, in order to reduce the 'opportunity costs' of going to school (Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; Rose and Dyer, 2008). However, as Michael B. Katz observed with regard to the global North in the nineteenth and twentieth century, 'the results of public education have remained quite at variance with its promise, especially to the poor and to minorities' (Katz, 1976: 399). For the majority of people around the world, including in Ethiopia, mass

education has not fulfilled its promises of prosperity at either household or national levels, and thus school attendance cannot simply be the outcome of rational, cost benefit analyses. The 'vexing issue of why the ideology of public education came to be an axiom of popular belief accepted throughout the social structure' thus remains unexplained in this sub-Saharan African context (Katz, 1976: 399).

2.3.3 Education and normativity

Katz argued that, in nineteenth century North America, 'public education received popular assent at least partly because it did not differ from the dominant ideology of democratic capitalism in nineteenth-century North America' (Katz, 1976: 401). In the global South, the widespread uptake of mass education might likewise be explained by the fact that schools reflect and support newly dominant social values, including the ideologies of meritocracy, capitalism and neoliberalism, as well as changing notions of what is meant by a good childhood. Sociologists of childhood have discussed how, towards the end of the nineteenth century, and increasingly so throughout the twentieth century, childhood and education became inextricable, and even synonymous in the Western imagination (Boyden, 2009; Nieuwenhuys, 1996; Prout, 2005). Indeed, Prout (2005: 35) argues that it was precisely the removal of children from paid work and into schools that brought 'modern childhood' into existence. Education came to be understood as a 'normal' part of childhood, and throughout the twentieth century this notion was propagated throughout the world as a part of the 'modernising' development agenda (Boyden, 1997; Prout, 2005). Many international organisations and charities continue today to

promote an ideal, moralised notion of childhood, based upon the 'sanctity' of the private realm of the home and the school as the only appropriate arena for childhood, and driven by the quest to abolish all forms of children's 'work' (Nieuwenhuys, 1996: 242). Governments throughout the South, meanwhile, have signed up to numerous targets including the MDGs and EFA goals that designate precisely these goals as indicators of development and progress. As these values become increasingly widespread in majority world societies, it becomes more likely that children will be sent to school because it is assumed that they will go; because this is the normative script for what it means to be a good child and to have a good childhood.

Conversely, the same theory of normativity is also used to explain why some children in the majority world do *not* go to school. In Ethiopia, for example, gender disparities in enrolment and participation have largely been attributed to cultural norms regarding gender roles. Girls' education is threatened by cultural practices such as early marriage, which although decreasing still prevent some girls' enrolment or continuation in education (Camfield, 2011a: 395; CSA, 2012). Gender norms that dictate that boys should be independent, proud and dominant, whilst girls are expected to be quiet, respectful and submissive have also been highlighted as constraining girls' performance and participation in Ethiopian schools (Abdulwasie, 2007; Alemayehu, 2007; Tamene, 2007). Moreover, traditional gender norms across Ethiopian cultures assign women to the private sphere, and thus it is often seen as inappropriate or inefficient to educate girls (Poluha, 2004: 50). This explanation of girls' non-

attendance also draws on the rational choice model of decision-making discussed above, then, in that families are believed to expect lower economic levels of return to their investment in girls' education (Colclough *et al.*, 1997: 4). The potential costs of education are also higher for girls in Ethiopia when their journey to and time spent at school pose risks of abduction, rape and violence, as well as taking them away from the domestic tasks traditionally allocated to young, female members of Ethiopian households (Camfield, 2011a: 399; Gorfu and Demsse, 2007, Poluha, 2004).

Low enrolment rates among certain ethnic and cultural minorities in Ethiopia have also been explained through notions of normativity. In particular, low levels of participation among children from nomadic and pastoralist cultures have been explained as a result of lifestyles and cultural norms which conflict with the Eurocentric culture of schooling, and by parents' attachment to and investment in alternative forms of social capital (Bunyi, 2006; Carr-Hill, 2006; Pereznieto and Jones, 2006). Critics have also noted that the sedentary and often urban location of schools excludes children from those minority cultures whose lifestyle is inherently mobile (see Carr-Hill, 2006). Again although a 'cultural' explanation of children's non-attendance, this idea is underpinned by a rational model of thought and behavior and thus reflects neo-liberal ideology; parents are believed to make value-based assessments of the costs and benefits of schooling and alternative, 'traditional' lifestyles for their children.

The theory of normativity informs policies which seek to educate parents about the benefits of education, and thus to transform the types of social capital

valued within a society (Hillman and Jenkner, 2004). Conversely, it has also inspired interventions that adapt educational provision to be more fitting and relevant to the priorities and life views of certain social groups (Kröttli and Dyer, 2006; MoE, 2010). However, this model of educational participation is challenged by the fact that some children do not follow the normative scripts of what is 'good' for children within their societies (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013). In Ethiopia, and moreover in countries in the global North where the school has long been accepted as the 'appropriate' realm for childhood, a significant number of children do not go to school regularly or even at all (Reid, 1999; UNESCO, 2014). This deviation from the accepted script for a 'good' childhood is a clear illustration of the fact that, as human beings, children's (and adults') behaviour cannot be accounted for by reference only to cultural norms. This notion will be returned to later in this chapter, but first it is important to address the assumption – common among the above explanations of children's school attendance – that it is adults, rather than children and young people themselves, who decide whether or not the children in their care should go to school.

2.3.4 Children as decision makers

The assumption that it cannot be children themselves deciding to go to school reflects the overriding conception of children as distinct and subordinate to adults that was discussed earlier in this chapter. Such a view of childhood has led to children being denied agency, and being understood as impartial human beings who are of economic and social value only in terms of the adults they are expected to become and who do not know what is best for them. As discussed

above, childhood researchers have in recent decades contested these assumptions, and sought to replace them with a concept of children as legitimate social actors who are capable of decision-making and participation in many areas of life (Boyden, 2009; Wyness, 2000). Childhood is now understood as of interest in and of itself, rather than as merely a stage of 'becoming', and, moreover, research has recognised the active roles that young people play in shaping their worlds, rather than conceptualising them as passive individuals at the mercy of adults' decisions (James and James, 2004; Prout, 2005). This recognition of children's agency and the limits to chronological developmental models of competency has often stemmed from undeniable evidence of young people's agency and capability from the Global South. Children around the world act as key agents of social change; in their roles as heads of households and providers for their families and communities (De Boeck and Honwana, 2005; Lund, 2007), as well as in more controversial spheres such as sex work and armed conflict (Brett and McCallin, 1996; Hart and Tyrer, 2006, Reynolds *et al.*, 2006).

On the basis of this evidence of children's capacity for decision making, research has sought to illuminate the ways in which children around the world enact agency in deciding if, where and when to go to school; whether this constitutes a consensual decision made in collaboration with adults who feel the same way, occurs as a result of negotiation in which children have had to argue the case for their education, or is a decision made in complete rejection or absence of parental advice or direction (Bourdillon *et al.*, 2010, Hashim, 2005). In

particular, research has considered the quest for education as a motivating factor underlying independent child migrants' movement away from their homes, particularly in rural areas (Hashim, 2005; Iversen, 2002). In Ethiopia, because cultural norms have historically encouraged parents to keep their children at home or in work rather than at school, children's determination and agency have been seen as especially important in deciding their school attendance, particularly among girls (Roschanski, 2007).

In asserting children's agency in relation to decision-making about their school attendance – and indeed in other spheres of life – research has often sought to emphasise children's rationality and maturity. With regards to educational participation, this rationality is primarily conceptualised as the ability to evaluate the relative merits of work and schooling, as per the assumptions of the rational individual that underpin the economic model discussed above (Harbaugh *et al.*, 2001). This emphasis on rationality is evident in the majority of the research that recognises children as involved in decision-making about their schooling. This literature emphasises children's assessment of the potential of formal education to enable them to secure an adequate, or indeed superior, livelihood in the future, before making a rational, reasoned and tactical decision about whether to start or remain in education, or to pursue other life strategies (see for example Hashim, 2005; Iversen, 2002). It is this recognition of children's agency that informs incentive and attitude-based policies which target children directly, rather than seeking to convince parents to 'send' their children to school (Iversen, 2002: 830).

The so-called 'new' sociology of childhood has importantly highlighted children's agency, and rightfully addresses the limitations of orthodox accounts of education that assume that young people attend school simply because they are sent by adults, and which can thus render children passive and disempowered. However, there remain significant limitations to these explanations of children's participation in formal schooling. First, purely economic accounts of children's school attendance do not consider the moral or social reasons that might lead children to want to go to school. Second, the increasing emphasis on children as autonomous, rational actors has overlooked the impact that external factors including cultural norms, material circumstances and political and institutional structures have upon children and adults' decision making. The following discussion explores how the ideas of critical realism can address some of the gaps and inadequacies in our current understandings of why children and adults 'choose' formal education for themselves and/or those in their care.

2.3.5 Addressing the gaps: Critical realism and school attendance

A critical realist ontology can enable a fuller conceptualisation and more adequate exploration of children's agency in relation to their school attendance. To date, as illustrated by the research discussed above, children's agency has often been understood simply in terms of their ability to 'be' and 'do' certain things. In contrast, critical realism, particularly in the forms put forward by Andrew Sayer (2000, 2004, 2011) and Margaret Archer (2000), encourages us to think about why children and their families would *want* to invest in education, or what they might care enough about to feel compelled to do so. It also

encourages examination of the external, or 'generative' mechanisms that shape children's understandings and behaviours (Alderson, 2013; Bhaskar, 1978).

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the presentation of children who go to school as instrumental, rational, economic actors is problematic. It is argued that the field of childhood studies has gained respect from the academic community *only because of* its presentation of children as mature 'beings' rather than incomplete 'becomings' (Lee, 1998). That is, in order for children to be recognised as exercising control over their lives, it is understood that they must be demonstrated to be as capable of rational decision-making as their adult counterparts are assumed to be. However, in their emphasis of children's aptitude and rationality, childhood theorists have at times come to overlook the reasons why children would *want* to act. As Sayer has argued, 'on its own, the concept of human agency implies an ability to choose to do things, but gives no indication of why we should want to' (Sayer, 2011: 140). Critical realists recognise the fact that 'our relationship to the world is one of concern' and that people act, in part, because things mean enough to them to warrant action (Sayer, 2011: 113). They are interested in human beings as moral social beings, who act in part on the basis of instrumental rationality but also commit themselves to 'ultimate concerns' and as a result choose certain paths of actions and define themselves in certain ways (Archer, 2000; Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013: 358). The approach thus offers conceptual tools with which to explore how children's motivations for school attendance might go beyond rational assessments of the instrumental costs and benefits of education

without reducing children to the sites of social construction. These tools enable researchers to conceptualise individual children as human beings with their own properties and powers, who act because they care about things. They are used in this thesis to ask why children in Hawassa would want to go to school, and to consider the moral and social reasons that were leading children to commit themselves to education and not to other courses of action.

As well as the moral reasons that children choose to act or not to act, a critical realist ontology allows examination of the structures that enable children to exercise agency in some circumstances and arenas but not in others. Agency can indeed be understood as one fundamental aspect of being human.

However, people – both children and adults – are not entirely free agents, but rather have the capacity for agency that is interdependent with external constraints and enablements (Archer, 2000). A critical realist ontology divides the social world into three dimensions: the *real*, the *actual* and the *empirical*. The ‘real’ dimension consists of causal or ‘generative’ mechanisms, which determine human understandings and behaviours, whilst the ‘actual’ dimension entails the events that occur as a result of these multiple generative mechanisms interacting, and the ‘empirical’ consists of these phenomena as we observe and experience them (Bhaskar, 1978). Among the causal mechanisms shaping human behaviour are individuals’ beliefs, concerns and ideas of the good, which ‘push’ them to act (Tao, 2013: 8). However, human beings do not exist only in this plane of inner being and subjective agency. Instead, Roy Bhaskar has asserted that human agency exists and is maintained within four

planes of social being (Bhaskar, 2008; see *Figure 1*). As well as people's ultimate concerns, the generative mechanisms that shape human behaviour and observed social phenomena also occur within people's material relations with nature and the physical realities of their lives, within their social relations with other people as agents of institutions and inherited social structures, and within their interpersonal subjective relationships with individuals and groups (Alderson, 2013; Bhaskar, 2008). These generative mechanisms operate in an open system, and do not independently determine human behaviour. Instead they interact to block or enable the courses of action that people's individual beliefs and concerns would lead them to (Alderson, 2013; Tao, 2013: 8).

Figure 1: Bhaskar's (2008) four planes of being

1. Plane of material relations/interactions with nature
2. Plane of interpersonal interaction/relationships
3. Plane of broader social relations and structures
4. Plane of intersubjectivity/inner being

Some childhood theorists have acknowledged that although children are actors, negotiators, constructors and agents, their agency is located within the context of adult structures, institutions and powers (James and James, 2012; Mayall, 2002; Twum-Danso, 2010). However, in answering the question of why children go to school, this recognition has only been partial, as a result of researchers' inclination to emphasise children's maturity and competency. This thesis seeks to address this oversight by exploring the constraining and enabling factors that

were shaping children in Hawassa's ability to enact agency in decision-making about their attendance, and the generative mechanisms that led children – and their families – to choose education above alternative activities. Such generative mechanisms might be discursive or cultural, and the 'new' sociology of childhood has much evidence to offer in support of the critical realist idea that dominant discourses and understandings can provide reasons for people to act, and (Alderson, 2013: 61; Sayer, 2011: 139). The literature reviewed in this chapter has demonstrated that what is understood as an appropriate 'childhood' around the world can shape the childhoods that children experience, and that the construction of the school as an – or the – appropriate site for childhood has been identified as a real motivation for children to attend school. However, the ontology of critical realism enables recognition of the impact of these discursive forces without reducing children to passive puppets of cultural normativity. These discursive generative mechanisms operate in an open system, interacting with the material resources, interpersonal relationships and structures of power that children's actions and choices presuppose, as well as the moral concerns that motivate them to act (Alderson, 2013; Bhaskar, 2008; Tao, 2013).

This thesis contributes to a growing field of research that locates an understanding of children's lives and choices within the context of local and global cultural, economic and political structures, but does not lose sight of children's own ultimate concerns within these mechanisms (see Abebe and Kjørholt, 2009; Boyden, 2013; Camfield, 2010; Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013;

Morrow, 2013). The analysis in Chapters Four to Seven uses the conceptual tools from critical realism discussed in this chapter in order to identify external generative mechanisms that interacted with children in Hawassa's subjective or moral concerns in order to shape their motivations for going to school and, ultimately, to result in the observed phenomena of their participation in primary education.

2.4 Evaluating children's claims about their education

The critical realist notion that children's understandings – like all human knowledge – are socially constrained by the descriptions and discourses available to them also allows for the recognition that children – and adults – can be mistaken (Sayer, 2000: 2). This appreciation of the 'fallibility' of human knowledge is also founded on another realist conviction; that there is an objective reality to 'know about', that there is therefore something to be wrong about, and thus that one account of reality can be deemed more adequate and valid than another (Bhaskar, 1978; Porter, 2007; Sayer, 2011). It challenges a key assumption from the 'new' sociology of childhood, which is that listening to children will produce more 'authentic' knowledge, because children are 'transparently knowable to themselves' (Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008: 502). The fallibility of human knowledge points to the need for research that listens to children and considers the meanings that they attribute to their actions, but also critically examines the worlds in which these words and actions take place, asking where these understandings come from and whether they constitute credible accounts of an external reality. The analysis in this thesis accordingly

takes children in Hawassa's accounts of their education as a valuable and important source of knowledge, but engages in critical analysis in order to consider whether or not their expectations regarding the outcomes of their education were realistic.

Furthermore, recognising that it is possible to scrutinise the relative merit of different discourses and accounts of reality and decide that one is more adequate than another enables realist social science to identify potentially harmful social understandings as false and to bring into question the actions and conditions that are based upon these beliefs (Sayer, 2000: 19, 2004: 14). As well as questioning whether children's expectations were likely to be fulfilled, the research discussed in this thesis also asked whether the reasons for going to school asserted by these children – and the structures that underpin these motivations – suggest that education in Hawassa was expanding or inhibiting children's individual and collective capabilities, agency and freedom. This normativity challenges the judgement-free ideals of cultural relativism and anthropocentrism that global childhood research has tended towards (Alderson, 2013; James and James, 2004: 19; Prout and James, 1997: 26). However, this is not about reasserting adult-centric views of the world. Instead, it is about combining listening to children with critical analysis of their understandings in order to obtain epistemic gain. As Alderson has asserted,

Critical researchers [...] are no more expert than anyone else about 'what is wrong and what ought to be done' [...] Their skill lies in collecting and analysing the evidence, the

background details and participants' views as fairly and fully as possible, in pointing out ignorance and inconsistency and in making connections, perhaps by exploring future options and their potential short- and long-term effects.

(Alderson, 2013: 134)

Critical realists have argued that moral judgement does not make social research unscientific, but is in fact both inevitable and necessary. Just as the 'subjects' of research have ultimate beliefs and moral concerns that shape their understandings and behaviours, so too do researchers. There would not be much value to research, and indeed research would not have much of value to say, if social researchers did not feel that something was wrong with what they were observing, or that the world could be improved. Critical realists take this one step further by arguing that this judgement does not have to be entirely personal or subjective, but instead that human suffering and well-being are real, objective states of being and that one understanding can and should be judged better than another (Sayer, 2011). As Sayer has argued, for instance, to find 'value-free' terms to describe racism, or the human consequences of war, would be to turn descriptions into 'misdescriptions' (Sayer, 2011: 7). These phenomena result in real and observable harm, and the role of social research should be to draw attention to these social problems. The analysis in this thesis relies upon Sayer's (2011) critical realist notion that ill and well-being are objective states of being, and that social research must therefore evaluate social phenomena – including educational interventions - in terms of how they

enhance these states of being. Specifically, it draws on ideas of individual and collective capabilities in order to evaluate both existing educational provision in Hawassa and the functions that children attributed to their own schooling. These evaluations recognise that children might have aspirations for their education that are detrimental to their own being. Human capabilities theorists, like critical realists, have acknowledged that people's understandings and desires are limited by the discourses available to them. The notion of 'adaptive preferences' has been used to describe the phenomenon in which human beings adapt their preferences and subjective evaluations in line with unequal external constraints on their capabilities, and thus come to accept and even be complicit in their own subordination and do not desire or demand freedom (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 2002a; Watts *et al.*, 2008). Utilising this concept of adaptive preferences enabled this research to take seriously the valued capabilities that children expected and wanted to be expanded by their education, but at the same time to question what factors were leading children to hold these expectations. The analysis in this thesis is therefore able to consider whether the things that children in Hawassa wished and expected to arise from their education were outcomes that they had true 'reason' to value (Sen, 1981).

2.5 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has reviewed the existing theoretical and empirical literature that has attempted to explain if and why children in Ethiopia, in developing, sub-Saharan contexts and more generally should attend

school, and how individual children do or do not come to do so. With regard to the former question about if and why children should go to school, the review of the literature has demonstrated that it seems to be only a minority who would argue that children in Ethiopia – or anywhere – should not be going to school. For the majority of those that do object to the expansion of schooling, it is the form and purpose that that education currently assumes, rather than the notion of education itself, that is objected to. By and large, education is understood as a potential good; capable of contributing to progress, advancement and ‘development’. However, different conceptions of what is meant by ‘development’ have resulted in different roles and functions being ascribed to formal schooling. Human capital theorists expect education to produce an efficient workforce to create national, economic growth, whilst in more recent years development discourse has come to include ideas of poverty reduction and the meeting of individuals’ and households’ basic needs. However, within this basic needs paradigm, the predominant conception of education has continued to be as preparation for economic labour. Crudely, if a child goes to school, it is anticipated that they will have increased earning potential and so be able to meet the needs of themselves and their families. In contrast, the human capabilities paradigm has emphasised the role of education in preparing children – and adults – for a fully human life, including participation, choice and freedom as well as physical health and the ability to command a sufficient income. Some capabilities theorists have also surpassed neoliberal ideas of individual freedom to think about collective capabilities and freedoms.

In addition to evaluating these debates, the discussion in this chapter has highlighted the problematic fact that deliberations about if and why children should go to school have almost exclusively taken place among adult academics, practitioners and policy makers. Evidence from the 'new' sociology of childhood has demonstrated children's capacity for and entitlement to participation in such debates. The discussion in this chapter has therefore highlighted the importance of listening to children when thinking about if and why children should go to school, and what education can and should try to achieve.

As well as considering *why* children should go to school, this research was concerned with what leads children in Hawassa to actually end up attending – or indeed not attending – school. The above review of existing arguments has revealed that children's school attendance has varyingly been explained as a consequence of compulsion, normativity and/or economic rationality. These explanations have predominantly neglected children as decision-makers, and instead have assumed that it is adults who decide whether children will go to school. Recent research and theorising that has revealed children to be capable of enacting agency, including in decision making about their schooling, has importantly illuminated the limitations of this assumption. However, children's school attendance for the most part continues to be explained as a simple consequence of compulsion, rational cost-benefit analysis or pure normativity. Drawing on the ideas of critical realism, the discussion in this chapter has firstly reintroduced the moral into the social, pointing out the importance of asking what it is that children care about that leads them to want to go to school.

Second, it has contended that although children – like all human beings – do indeed possess the potential for agency, their ability to enact that agency depends on external constraints and enablements, which can be material, cultural, structural and discursive. These generative mechanisms, which combine to lead children to ‘choose’ school in certain moments, must therefore also be the subject of our analysis.

Finally, the discussion in this chapter has highlighted the fallibility of human knowledge (Sayer, 2000). It has accordingly contended that research must critically evaluate children’s narratives about their education, considering whether their expectations are realistic and, paying close attention to the discourses that they are dependent upon and constrained by, whether these motivations suggest that education is contributing to or constraining children’s well-being and freedom. The capabilities approach, which recognises both that people adapt their expectations in line with the conditions that they are constrained by, and that the expansion of valued capabilities is not an inevitable outcome of all forms of education, provides a useful framework for such evaluation.

The following chapter sets out the methodological approach through which the conceptual tools discussed in this chapter were employed in order to answer the following research questions, which were set out in Chapter One:

Q1 *What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school, and what do they expect to gain from their education?*

- Q2 *To what extent are these reasons for going to school consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses about the purposes and value of education?*
- Q3 *What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?*
- Q4 *To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?*

Chapter Three: The Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter One of this thesis introduced the research questions that were addressed by this research, which explored the question of why children go to school through a case study of primary education in Hawassa, Ethiopia. The main research question addressed by the research asked

In the urban African context of Hawassa, Ethiopia, what motivates children to go to school, and to what extent do children's explanations of their schooling correspond with dominant arguments for universal primary education?

That overarching question gave rise to the following sub-questions:

- Q1 *What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school, and what do they expect to gain from their education?*
- Q2 *To what extent are these reasons for going to school consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses about the purposes and value of education?*
- Q3 *What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?*
- Q4 *To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?*

The literature review in Chapter Two reviewed and critiqued the existing theoretical and empirical literature that has sought to explain if and why

children in Ethiopia, in a developing, sub-Saharan context and around the world should and do attend school. It demonstrated the limits to current answers to these questions, and asserted the need for a new approach to understanding why children go to school that includes children's voices in important debates about what education is and should be for, but recognises the effects of external constraints upon children's understandings and actions.

In this chapter, the methods that were used in order to answer the above research questions are described in detail. This begins with a discussion of the ways in which Ethiopia provides a suitable and interesting national context in which to consider why children should go to school, and what motivates them to do so. The practicalities of the research conducted with children attending school in Hawassa are then set out. This includes how children were accessed and sampled, and how a mixed-method approach including participatory focus groups and child-conferences as well as traditional interviews was employed in order to explore if and why children were committed to going to school (Q1), and to consider what (if anything) children's accounts of their educational participation might add to existing, adult narratives about why they should attend (Q2). Next, the 'critical' element of this research is explained. This includes the interviews conducted with school staff and analysis of observational data, official statistics and national education and development policies that were utilised in order to uncover the external constraints and enablements shaping children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school (Q3). It also includes a discussion of how findings from the two elements of the

research were brought together in order to evaluate children's claims and consider the extent to which their narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might be enabling them to live lives that they have reason to value (Q4).

Finally, the strategies that were adopted throughout the design and implementation of this research in order to ensure that the research was ethically sound are described. Particular ethical dilemmas that arose in this project, including those relating to issues of consent, confidentiality, anonymity and the protection of both participants and researcher from harm are discussed, along with their outcomes. Throughout the chapter the discussion illustrates the ways in which the methods used and methodological approach adopted were informed by and appropriate to the critical realist understanding of children's motivations and behaviours set out in Chapter Two.

3.2 Why research primary education in urban Ethiopia?

Case studies have been used by social researchers in various ways and to achieve various ends. For example, case study research can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory (Yin, 2014). It can be used to highlight the particularities of an 'extreme' or unique case, or to generalise from multiple cases or one 'typical' case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). What all case studies have in common is a focus on gathering multiple forms of data from a naturalistic setting, resulting in a depth and detail of knowledge that allows the researcher to understand the complexities of a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). In this instance, a case study methodology was adopted in order to explore the specific, context-

dependent factors that might lead children in Hawassa to want to go to school, but also to test more general theories about why children go to school and about their motivations and behaviours as human beings. One of the strengths of case study research lies in its ability to disprove or falsify existing theories and explanations (Campbell, 1975; Flyvbjerg, 2006). For instance, Flyvbjerg's study of urban politics and planning in Aalborg, Denmark disproved a general theory of economic rationality, representative democracy and free market economics by highlighting the corruption and illicit deals that dominated the business and government community in that city (Flyvbjerg, 1998; 2006). Using the conceptual tools from critical realism discussed in Chapter Two, this research sought to improve upon existing understandings of what leads children to go to school. Specifically, it was anticipated that the limited theories of economic rationality and normativity would be inadequate in explaining why children in Hawassa went to school. By examining the moral concerns and generative mechanisms that underpinned children in this context's motivations for going to school, the research sought to explain more fully the causal relationships that led to the observed phenomenon of children's school attendance. The case study therefore not only explores the factors underpinning children's participation in education in this specific context, but also aspires to 'epistemic gain' (Sayer, 2011) with regards to children's school attendance and agency more generally. If the findings from this case study disprove the idea that children go to school simply because it is the 'normal' thing for them to do, or because they or their parents decide that it is a more

profitable course of action, then the generalist theories of normativity and economic rationality must be reconsidered (Flybjerg, 1998).

Questions about why children should and do go to school, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, are pertinent across the world, and not specific to sub-Saharan Africa. However, there were a number of reasons that led to the selection of Ethiopia as the location for this case study. First, my own academic interest in childhood and education began in Africa. In 2007, I spent time in Swaziland, Southern Africa, where persistent school fees excluded many children from participating in education. Some of the young children and their adult caregivers who I became close to wanted to get help with the costs of schooling, and I felt strongly that I wanted to assist them. However, being in this context that was so different to the one that I grew up in led me to ask questions about education and childhood not only in relation to this context, but also the circumstances that I came from. Why did I think these children should go to school? Why had I gone to school? What was education for? In the face of Swazi children and adults' absolute faith in the power of education to transform their lives, I also became skeptical about what schooling could really achieve for these people, anticipating that the reality of the Swazi economy meant that there would be few jobs awaiting even those children who did manage to gain an education. I also observed that many children who did go to school seemed to struggle to learn in large classes with poor resources, and often ended up repeating grades until they eventually dropped out of school without gaining even basic literacy skills.

I have pursued questions about why children should and do go to school throughout my academic career. My journey to conducting this PhD reflects the different approaches that can be taken to understanding why children go to school that were set out in Chapter Two. My undergraduate dissertation analysed quantitative social and economic data and the secondary research literature in order to examine progress towards and the usefulness of the second Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education [UPE] in four sub-Saharan African nations, including Swaziland and Ethiopia. My Masters thesis, in contrast, sought to include children's voices in these debates. In that research I used participatory focus groups and semi-structured interviews with children attending school in one Ghanaian town to explore children's experiences and understandings of the (inter)national push towards UPE. The preceding chapter of this thesis has demonstrated the ways in which, in this thesis, I am seeking to go further than this, and to take seriously children's motives and experiences, but also to examine the wider contexts and structures within which children's words and actions take place.

Having come to my interest in childhood and education primarily through the debates regarding African education, I was aware that sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the lowest rates of participation, is often seen as 'problematic' in terms of education and schooling, but also as a region of great opportunity for change. I wanted to conduct this research in a country identified as a 'success' in terms of increasing enrolment, but where the problems and challenges associated with expanding education were also apparent, and where debates

about if and why children should go to school were still real and paramount. Having reviewed the case of Ethiopia in my undergraduate dissertation, the country provided an intriguing choice.

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa, with a reported population of 92 million in 2012 (World Bank, 2013). This population is growing rapidly, with an average annual growth rate of 2.78 per cent reported between 2010 and 2012. Ethiopia is officially a 'less-developed country', with a 2012 GDP of US\$41.61 billion, and was ranked 173rd out of 186 countries in the 2013 Human Development Index (UNDP, 2013). More than 80 per cent of the Ethiopian population lives in rural areas, and the nation is predominantly dependent on agriculture for income and subsistence. (MoE, 2010). Ethiopia is in many ways exceptional within sub-Saharan Africa; the nation has its own calendar and its own way of telling the time, is one of Africa's fastest growing economies (African Economic Outlook, 2014), and was never colonised by European imperialists.

Ethiopia is also a fascinating country with specific regard to education and schooling. Mass provision of formal education is still a relatively new phenomenon in this nation, where at the turn of the century the majority of children of primary school age were still not enrolled in the system (UNESCO, 2014). Questions about if and why children should go to school are therefore highly relevant, and still to be answered, in this rapidly changing context. Ethiopia is a country that exemplifies both investment and belief in education and its promised outcomes, and the problems and challenges that arise with

expanded educational provision. The current government's approach to education has often been held up as a 'success story' and an example for others, on the basis of both its fiscal investment in the schooling system, and its success in achieving dramatic increases in primary school enrolment in particular (Green, 2010; IRIN, 2010; MDG Monitor, no date). At the same time, however, these unprecedented rises in participation have led to new problems in schools, including a lack of qualified teachers, poor quality provision and high levels of drop-out and non-completion. As with elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa [SSA] and across the majority world, there has been much criticism regarding the inappropriateness of existing curricula and forms of educational delivery in an Ethiopian context (Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; Roschanski, 2007; Woodhead, 2009; World Bank, 2005). The coercive power of education as a tool of social control is also pertinent in this Ethiopian context. The nation state of Ethiopia is a particularly contested 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983; see Chapter Two of this thesis). As a federation of ethnic nations which each have right to succession and self-rule, the legitimacy of the imagined community of Ethiopia is constantly under question. As will be argued in Chapter Four and throughout this thesis, formal education has been used as a key tool in the imagining and managing of the nation state of 'Ethiopia'.

As the purposes and value of education are being questioned around the world in the context of global economic and employment crises, then, Ethiopia provides an extremely interesting case study through which to explore questions about why children should or should not, and do or do not go to

school. This research was conducted in an urban context in order to examine a relatively under-researched context that is becoming the situation in which increasing numbers of Ethiopian children are living and going to school. Much research about education in Ethiopia has been conducted in rural areas, and has particularly focused on the material and cultural barriers to education. It was anticipated that many of these barriers – such as the idea that formal education is not consistent with agricultural or nomadic lifestyles – would be less relevant in towns and cities. Moreover, Ethiopia, like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa and across the global South, is urbanising. Although Ethiopia is one of the most rural countries in the world, and the proportion of the Ethiopian population living in urban areas was still below 20 per cent in 2014 (UN, 2014), this proportion has been rising steadily and, combined with population growth, this means that growing up and going to school in towns and cities is becoming the experience of more and more Ethiopian children. Additionally, many children – including some of the participants in this research – migrate without their parents to towns explicitly in order to pursue formal education. Exploring urban Ethiopian children's experiences of and motivations for going to school was therefore identified as an important as well as original line of enquiry. It was also anticipated that levels of spoken English and infrastructure would make it easier to conduct this research in a city of substantial size than in rural areas.

3.3 Listening to children in Hawassa, Ethiopia

As a case study, this research drew on multiple forms of evidence to investigate the phenomenon of children's school attendance in Hawassa (Gillham, 2000).

The primary component of the research involved research with children attending school in the city. This qualitative research set out to investigate the reasons that children gave for their school attendance (Q1), to consider the extent to which these reasons were consistent with or challenged the dominant policy discourses about why children should go to school that were set out in Chapter Two (Q2), and to explore the moral concerns and cultural constraints and enablements shaping children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school (Q3). Listening to children's accounts of their educational participation also enabled the research, through the lens of individual and collective capabilities, to consider whether if and how education in Hawassa might be enabling children to live lives that they had reason to value (Q4).

This component of the research was conducted with schoolchildren in Hawassa, Ethiopia between June 2012 and May 2013, and involved four distinct stages, set out in *Table 1* below. The following discussion describes the detail of how this element of the research was conducted.

Table 1: The four stages of listening to children in Hawassa

	June 2012	July 2012	Aug 2012	Sept 2012	Oct 2012	Nov 2012	Dec 2012	Jan 2013	Feb 2013	March 2013	April 2013	May 2013
Making contacts, negotiating access, sampling.												
'Participatory' focus groups with children												
Interviews with children and teachers												
First stage of analysis (UK-based)												
Child-conferences												

3.2.1 Access and sampling strategy

The first sampling decision made in the design of this project was the choice of Hawassa as the case study city. Hawassa (Awasa, Awassa) lies a six-hour drive south of the capital city of Addis Ababa, on the road to the Southern lowlands of Ethiopia and, eventually, Kenya (*Figure 2*). Hawassa is the capital city of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia [SNNPR].

Although the SNNPR is the most rural region of Ethiopia according to the most recent census, over half of the 258,808 people living in the 'Hawassa city administration zone' in 2007 were living in the city itself, rather than in rural areas (FDRE, 2007), and this figure is likely to have increased significantly in the last eight years. The same census recorded 41,687 children aged 6-16 living in the urban area of the Hawassa 'zone', constituting just over a quarter of the entire population and over 90% of whom were attending or had at some point attended school (FDRE, 2007). My focus was on this urban context, although

some of my young participants were living in the rural *kebeles* or 'villages' surrounding the city.

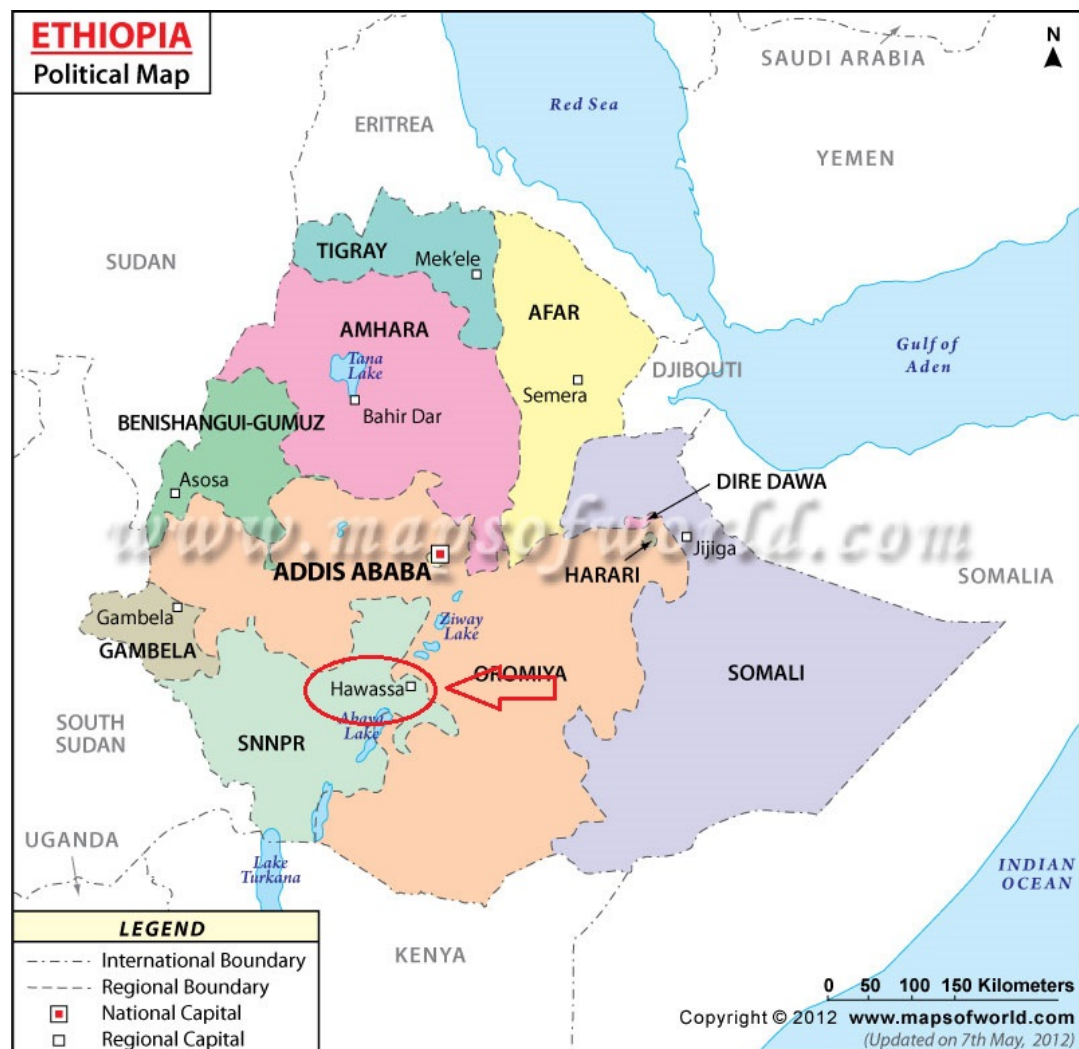
Figure 2: Hawassa's location within Ethiopia



Although students throughout Ethiopia study for national exams and follow a national curriculum, a significant degree of responsibility with regard to the planning and delivering of education is devolved to regional governments under the federal system of government. Hawassa provided an interesting locale for this research because, as the capital city of the SNNPR (see *Figure 3*), it is the city where decision-making about the planning and delivering of education across the administrative region takes place. As a relatively large city (the sixth

largest in Ethiopia), but not one of the two self-governing city administrations, Hawassa is also situated more ‘typically’ within the country’s federal governance structure than Addis Ababa, for example.

Figure 3: Hawassa is the capital of the SNNPR region of Ethiopia



A personal contact made through one of my supervisors also meant that there was someone to introduce me to Hawassa upon my arrival, although this contact did not play a significant role in terms of facilitating the research beyond this point. In fact, my initial experiences in the field were incredibly significant in refining and formulating both my fieldwork plans and research

questions. When I first arrived in Hawassa I had planned to access participants through a local orphanage with which I had made contact. It was my intention to develop a reciprocal relationship with this orphanage, where in return for my help with tutoring, organising a summer camp and so on, the organisation would facilitate my research and offer me access to children who might want to take part. I believed that, given the fact that children would have come to the orphanage at different ages, they would have a range of experiences of the Ethiopian education system. I also hoped to make contact with children and young people who were not in education, through a partner organisation working with 'street children' and marginalised young adults in Hawassa.

However, upon arrival in Hawassa it became clear that this strategy would not be feasible or appropriate. First, the relationships between the orphanage and its 'partner' organisation had deteriorated, meaning that it would have been difficult to negotiate working relationships with both parties. Second, although children living at the orphanage had indeed had differing experiences of education in the past, they were now being sent to two local private schools, meaning that they shared very specific experiences of schooling in Hawassa. Furthermore, it became obvious that children's motivations for going to school, and their feelings about education in general were often significantly tied up in feelings of responsibility, gratitude and obligation to their families, as will be demonstrated in later chapters of this thesis. I therefore felt that only working with children living in this very unique 'family' setting would lead me to a narrow understanding of why 'children in Hawassa' went to school. Finally, I found that volunteering at the orphanage meant that it became quite difficult

to maintain boundaries in my relationships with both adults and children there, meaning that a) my research was at threat of being frequently 'postponed' and relegated in the face of more pressing day-to-day demands, and b) difficulties began to arise in negotiating my relationship with young people at the centre; was I there to be a friend? A tutor? A babysitter? A researcher? In the end I had an honest conversation with the staff and children at the orphanage, and explained that although I was still interested in what they had to say about education – as I was with everyone I met in Hawassa – I had decided to conduct my formal research activities with children elsewhere, and would continue in my role as 'volunteer' at the centre.

As mentioned in the acknowledgements at the beginning of this thesis, I am incredibly grateful to everyone at the orphanage for their insights into what it is like to be a child growing up and going to school in urban Ethiopia. Spending time at the orphanage was also vital in allowing me to familiarise myself with some of the norms and conventions of life in Hawassa that would make it easier to work there. Having abandoned my original access strategy, I needed to decide how best to progress with my research. I was surprised by the lack of English spoken among both children and adults in Hawassa. Having been told that children were taught English in school from a very early age, and that adult professionals would have studied in English at college or university, I expected quite a high level of proficiency. However, I found that many younger children spoke no English, and that primary schooling in Hawassa was by and large conducted in Amharic. Although all teachers could greet me in English, many

were not confident enough to speak to me further. Even senior members of staff struggled to converse in huge depth with me. The head teacher of one private school highlighted the fact that, as jobs in Addis Ababa were more prestigious and better paid, most English speaking teachers would leave Hawassa to work there if they had the opportunity. It was therefore clear that I would need to use interpreters in at least some of my research activities, and this significantly limited my sampling options. Wandering around the streets of Hawassa with an interpreter in tow, hoping to meet children, was not feasible in terms of either time or resources. Fortunately, through my work at the orphanage I came into contact with a local teacher and teacher trainer who was able to help me to form a new access strategy. In discussion with this teacher, Tesfahun, I decided that the most practical way to access children was through their schools. Although this meant that I would not be able to access the opinions and experiences of children who had dropped out of school or indeed of those who had never attended, I had access to somewhere where I knew I would find children, and where I could also observe the physical and social environments of schools in Hawassa. Children who were attending school also spoke at least some English, compared to many of those outside of the education system, and having explained my research to Tesfahun meant that he was able to assist me in obtaining fully informed consent from the head teacher of each school. I first contacted the head teacher, or 'director' of each school through a letter (see *Appendix 1*). Once the directors had confirmed their interest in being involved in the research, I went to visit them – and/or the staff member they asked to deal with me – with Tesfahun. I also liaised with the

directors throughout the research, in order to ensure that they were happy with my being there.

The research sample included children studying at four primary schools in Hawassa, chosen partly on the basis of convenience, in that they had links with the key gatekeeper Tesfahun, but also purposively. Two private and two government schools, from different areas of the city and with varying ranges of educational resources, were deliberately sampled in order to access children from different family backgrounds, and who were experiencing a range of educational provision across the city. Of the two private schools, SOS and Union Academy, SOS is seen as the most exclusive and high quality primary school in Hawassa. There is a waiting list to be accepted into the school, and entry to the kindergarten and grade one is allocated by ballot. The school is linked to the international NGO SOS Children's Villages, and has links with many international organisations. The school offers scholarships to orphaned children in the community, as well as to children living in the SOS village. School fees at SOS ranged from 250-280birr (US\$12.75-14.17) per month, compared to 195-225birr (US\$9.87-11.39) at Union Academy, which although also understood to be one of the city's 'best' schools, was not afforded such excessive prestige.

Neither of the two government schools, Adare and Gebeye Dar, charged for tuition or enforced parental contributions, but there was nonetheless an observable difference between the material conditions at these two schools. Although lacking the technology and library facilities available at the private schools, the classrooms conditions at Adare were not dramatically inferior to

those at SOS and Union, and the building was a modern, two-storey school. In contrast, the classrooms at Gebeye Dar, which was located in one of the poorest areas of the city, on the edge of the urban zone, were mostly dilapidated, and many did not have electric light.

The sample included children between the ages of six and 16, who were currently enrolled in and attending the above schools. Two grades were selected from each school, so that one grade from the first cycle of primary schooling (grades one to four) and one from the second cycle (grades five to eight) was selected from each school, and all eight grades were accounted for, as illustrated in *Table 2*. However, the school Director (head teacher) at Adare denied access to grade one pupils on the basis that it was too early in their school careers for this disruption to their routine, and so participants were only selected from grades two to eight. At the other three schools, focus group sessions took place in break times, and so did not involve children missing any teaching time. At this school, however, breaks were shorter due to the shift system in place. The head teacher gave permission for the children who took part in the research to miss four lessons, as she and the children's class teacher felt that this was an important opportunity for children to practice their English. However, the head teacher felt that the grade one children needed a regular routine whilst they settled into school, and so was not willing for them to take part.

Table 2: Selection of grades for sampling

School funding	School name	First Cycle grade selected	Second Cycle grade selected
Private	SOS	2	6
	Union Academy	4	8
Government	Adare	1	5
	Gebeye Dar	3	7

Once these grades had been selected, children were sampled from class registers in order to obtain a sample of 10 students from each grade group. Based on previous experiences conducting research in schools in Ghana, participants were selected randomly, in the knowledge that school staff were likely to select ‘clever’ or ‘well-behaved’ students to take part, who might put forward a certain narrative about their education. Given that the schools could not all provide detailed information about students, for example with regard to household incomes and household composition, it was also hoped that random sampling would include children from a range of backgrounds. Despite some attrition, this initial sample of 70 grew to a final sample of 75 young participants, after eight children self-selected by accompanying friends to focus group sessions, and one student was put forward to participate by a head teacher. The head teacher wanted this child to take part for a particular reason, but it is not possible to explain this reason here without risking the anonymity that this participant requested. It is important to note that not every participant attended every research session. However, the attrition figures only include the four students who did not partake in any research activities, as even those children who attended only one research session made valuable contributions.

Participants were not sampled on the basis of gender, ethnicity or any other social characteristic, as these were not indicated on the registers. The final sample was 53 per cent female, 47 per cent male (see *Table 3*).

Table 3: Sample characteristics

School and grade	Final sample size	Male	Female	Mean age (years)
SOS grade two	10	4	6	7.5
SOS grade six	8	4	4	11.6
Union Academy grade four	13	9	4	10.3
Union Academy grade eight	15	6	9	14.4
Adare grade five	9	4	5	11.9
Gebeye Dar grade three	10	5	5	10.6
Gebeye Dar grade seven	10	3	7	14.0
Total Sample	75	35 (47%)	40 (53%)	11.6

3.2.2 Participatory focus groups with children

Each group attended a series of four focus group sessions, in which they partook in a range of research activities. *Table 4* sets out the research tools used in different focus group sessions. These included child-led tours, poster making, child-to-child interviews, storyboarding and diary writing. These methods are rooted in the participatory strand of childhood research, which has employed creative research tools in order to enable children to produce data in ways beyond the use of traditional, ‘spoken’ methods, which can prioritise adult forms of communication and exacerbate power relations (Johnston 2008;

Warming 2011). In particular, the multi-method approach adopted was inspired by the ‘mosaic approach’ (Clark and Moss, 2011), which advocates the use of play, children’s photographs, child-led tours and maps to instigate discussion and observation in order to achieve deeper understanding of young children’s worlds. It also drew on the creative techniques used in participatory rural appraisal, which many researchers have found useful in facilitating young children’s engagement with abstract and complex issues, particularly in overseas contexts where children might have low levels of literacy and little experience of bureaucracy, and where significant language barriers are often present (Guijt *et al.*, 1994; Thomas and O’Kane, 1998).

Table 4: Research tools used in focus groups

Session number	Research activities	Topics addressed
1	Child-led tour of school Group discussion	Introductions and ice-breakers Likes and dislikes about the school compound Why children go to school Why some children do not go to school
2	Poster making – annotating outlines of “At School” and “Not At School” children Secret ballots Group discussion	Features and differences between children who do and do not go to school – characteristics, traits, how they spend their time, imagined future trajectories Likes and dislikes about going to school
3	Diary making Drawing – storyboards of a typical school day and drawing a ‘dream’ or ‘perfect’ school Poster making	Activities inside and outside school Features of a perfect school Power and decision making in children’s lives
4	Child-to-child interviews	Likes and dislikes about school Future aspirations

As indicated in *Table 4* above, the topics addressed in focus group sessions included the reasons that children did and did not go to school, the differences between children who did and did not go to school, the things that participants liked and disliked about their own schooling and the valued capabilities that they expected to be expanded by their education, and what a 'perfect school' might be like. Some participants also constructed storyboards or diaries describing their typical day, and in each of the groups a collective decision-making matrix was used to explore who participants believed made different decisions about children's school lives. Each research activity produced material records of what was said to enable analysis, including drawings, posters and participants' diaries. Children's dramas and child-to-child interviews were also recorded in audio and/or video, but this was not possible or appropriate for all research activities. The grade eight pupils at Union Academy were able to partake in these focus group sessions without the aid of an interpreter. In the sessions with grade four students at this school a grade eight participant volunteered to translate, but for the five other groups it was necessary to use school staff as interpreters, for practical issues regarding the significant language barrier but also for reasons of gate keeping and access. This had methodological and ethical implications, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.2.3 Interviews with children in Hawassa

The second stage of the research with children in Hawassa entailed individual interviews with 67 of the children who had participated in the group sessions. These interviews addressed the same topics as covered in the focus groups, in

order to give more attention to individual experiences and to give those children who were not keen to voice their opinion in the group a chance to express themselves. Children were also asked about their family and household circumstances, how they themselves had come to attend to school, those factors that might make it hard for them and others to attend school, and if and how going to school made their life 'better'. These semi-structured interviews were assisted by independent, professional interpreters, and typically lasted between 15 and 20 minutes each. An example of a topic guide used in one of these interviews can be found in *Appendix 2*.

3.2.4 Child-conferences in Hawassa

The final stage of listening to children in Hawassa involved two 'child conferences' (sometimes abbreviated as CC1 and CC2 in the analysis in Chapters Five to Seven of this thesis), where students from different grades and schools were able to come together to discuss their experiences and respond to my initial analysis. It was intended that each child conference would pair one government and one private school, but unfortunately due to a big public event and communication difficulties on the day of the first conference (CC1), no students from Adare government school were able to attend. The child conferences took place five months after the interview stage of the research was completed, when analysis of the interview and focus group data had begun, and after participants had had time to think about the issues addressed in these activities. These conferences enabled further exploration of issues that had become particularly prominent, surprising or contradictory in the existing data, and allowed research questions to be more strongly shaped by participants'

priorities. More fundamentally, children were able to respond to and challenge the conclusions that I was beginning to draw from the focus groups and interview data. In the first activity at the child conferences, participants responded to three reports, in the form of posters, that summarised those initial findings into the three categories that shape this thesis; going to school to get a job, to become a 'good' person and to help Ethiopia (see *Appendix 3*). Participants were able to add to the posters, and to comment on what they thought I had got right and wrong, and what they thought was missing from these reports (see *Figure 4*). This led to a number of group discussions and debates. In smaller groups the children then created posters detailing how they thought that schooling might contribute to these three outcomes, and if and why they felt that these outcomes were important (*Figures 5 and 6*). At the second child conference, these groups were split by gender, although one girl joined the 'boys' group. At the first there were three groups; one all-male, one all-female and one mixed. After particular disagreement at the first child conference about whether going to school could help a child to avoid drug and alcohol addiction and to pursue a 'good' marriage, time was also spent debating these two questions. Participants also had discussions and created dramas about who was and should be responsible for different decisions about children's schooling and future pathways (see *Figure 7*). The two interpreters who assisted with interviews helped to facilitate these child conferences, along with one other.

Figure 4: Participants' annotations on posters about going to school 'to get a job', 'to become a good person' and 'to help Ethiopia'

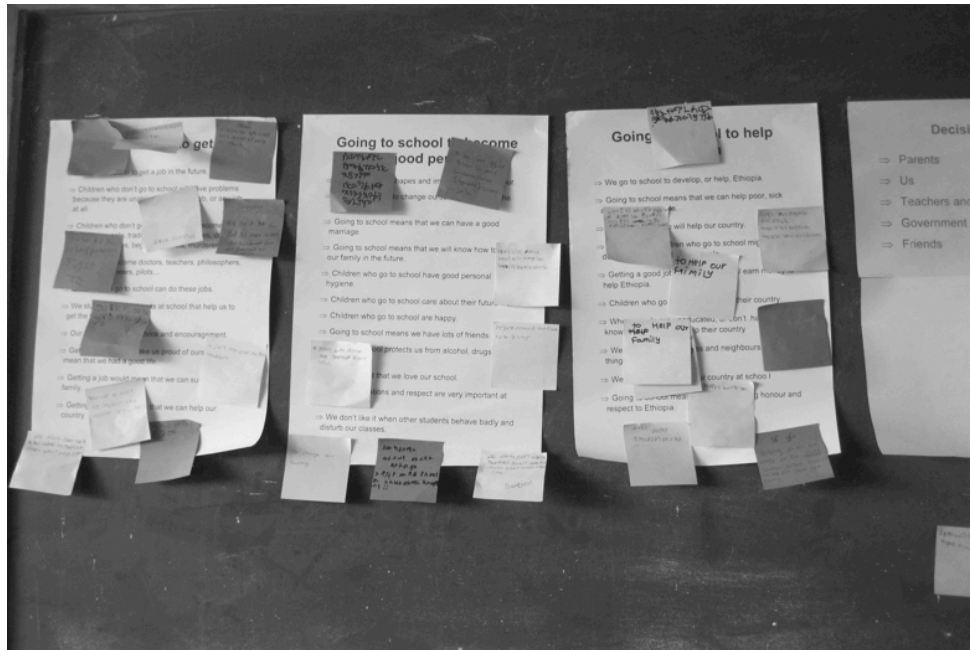


Figure 5: Male participants working on a poster with a interpreter



Figure 6: Posters from a child conference

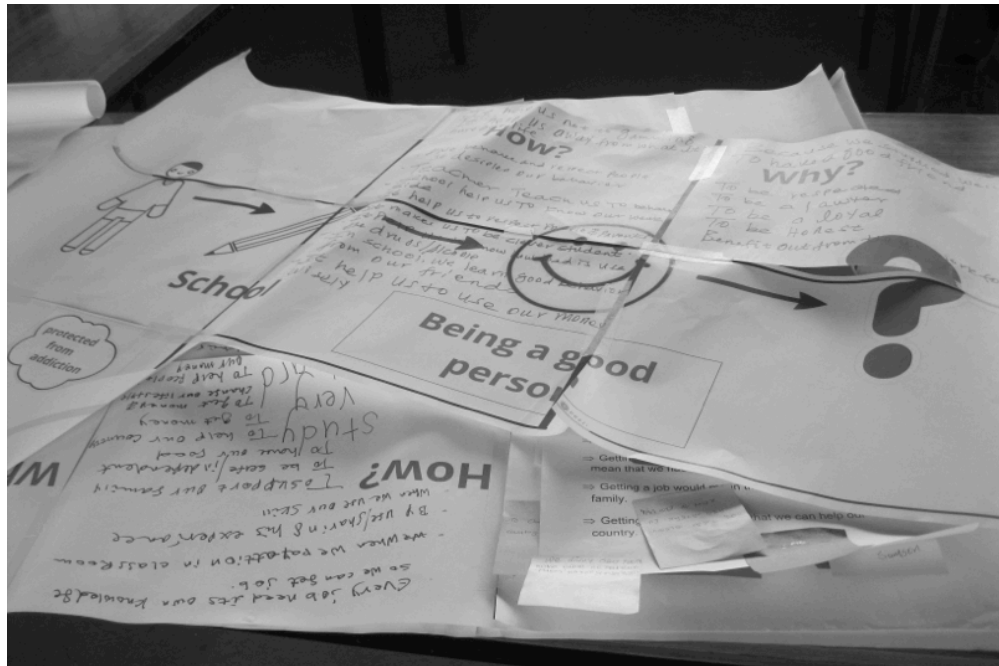


Figure 7: Female participants filming a 'drama'



3.2.5 Data produced from research with children in Hawassa

As indicated in *Table 1*, above, the research with children in Hawassa took a total of eight months. It resulted in a large qualitative dataset, which included transcriptions of children's individual and child-to-child interviews, video recordings of children's dramas and child-led tours, annotated posters and diagrams made in collaboration with groups of participants, children's written and drawn diaries, and field notes that were recorded immediately research session. These data were entered into NVivo for analysis, as detailed below.

3.4 Structural analysis of childhood in Hawassa

The 'structural' element of this research set out to analyse the cultural, political, institutional and economic factors that were 'generating' children in Hawassa's behaviours and understandings (Bhaskar, 1978). In order to explore the external constraints and enablements that, along with children in Hawassa's 'ultimate' moral concerns, encouraged them to go to school (Q3), it sought to detect the local and global discourses that children's motivations were rooted in, and to identify the generative mechanisms in all four of Bhaskar's 'planes of being' (Bhaskar, 2008; see Chapter Two of this thesis) that meant that in order to achieve their valued capabilities, or fulfill their ultimate concerns, children needed – or felt that they needed – to go to school. The fallibility of knowledge means that individual children – like all humans – are unlikely to be aware of all of the structures and mechanisms that are constraining their material circumstances, their opportunities and thus their choices (Bhaskar, 1989: 2). This research therefore needed to go beyond simply reproducing children's

accounts of their own worlds – to exercise sociological imagination and '[search] for underlying structures, explanations and generating mechanisms' (Alderson, 2013: 59-60). Observational data, economic and social statistics and government policy were therefore analysed in order to critically examine the material, discursive and political structures that were leading children in Hawassa to want to go to school. The following discussion describes how the detail of how this element of the research was conducted.

3.4.1 Observational data and interviews with adults in Hawassa

The analysis in this thesis draws on observational data gathered during the eight months that I spent in Hawassa; from June to December 2012, and for the whole of May 2013. This observation sought to identify discursive and structural mechanisms framing children's understandings of their education and enabling and constraining their motivations for going to school. Structured observation in schools was not employed in this research, in order to avoid – as far as possible – aligning myself with teachers and other authoritative adults in the eyes of the children who took part in the research. However, I spent a significant amount of time in the four schools where I conducted research activities with children, waiting for meetings with members of staff and wandering around at break times in between research sessions. I also interviewed a senior member of staff at each of the four schools, to explore why these education professionals believed that children in Hawassa should, did and did not attend school (see interview schedule in *Appendix 4*). These interviews and observations provided some insight into the expectations that adults held of children, the generational power relations that structured school life, and the norms and values that were

esteemed and propagated within the education system, as did the conversations I had with both adults and children within the school grounds. These expectations, norms and power relations were anticipated as potential generative mechanisms shaping children's motivations for going to school. Whilst living in the city I also spent time with neighbouring families in my local community, as well as volunteering at the orphanage discussed above. Again these interactions provided invaluable insight into the lives of children growing up and attending school in Hawassa, and the cultural and structural pressures that might be encouraging them to go to school.

I recorded my observations in a field diary at least every few days, as well as detailed field notes taken after every formal research session. This research diary provided a record of what I had learnt about life in Hawassa as I saw it, and also constituted the beginnings of analysis. Field notes enable researchers to make sense of both our own experiences and understandings and how the research is developing, and force us to attend to the mundane and every day in the lives of those we are researching (Crang and Cook, 2007). My field diary provided a source for analysis like the other material records produced, and entries were analysed thematically in NVivo.

3.4.2 Analysis of official statistics

In addition to the above observational data, this thesis interrogates economic, social, and educational statistics in order to examine the structural context in which children in Hawassa were making decisions about going to school. World Bank figures (World Bank, 2010) were employed to examine trends in the

proportion of total government spending allocated to education, and OECD data (OECD, 2014) to examine foreign aid to Ethiopia generally and for education in particular. National levels of participation in primary education were analysed using the net enrolment ratio [NER], which measures the number of appropriately school-age children in school as a proportion of the entire population of that age, and the proportion of children enrolling in primary education 'surviving' to the last grade of primary education. These figures were taken from the UNESCO *Education for All Global Monitoring Reports* (UNESCO, 2011; 2014) and the Millennium Development Goals Database (UNSD, 2014). These figures are those used by both UN agencies and the World Bank in reporting on the state of education. Where possible, national figures gathered by the Ethiopian government were also examined. Government figures proved particularly useful for exploring indicators of education 'quality', including class sizes, measures of gender equality, teacher qualifications and national examination scores (see for example MoE, 2010).

The use of official statistics regarding education and economics in sub-Saharan Africa always raises issues of reliability. The dearth of accurate, reliable (particularly historical) data on education in Africa has been well documented (Baldwin and Diers, 2009; Marshall, 2010), but nevertheless some indication of general trends in educational participation can illuminate the context in which children and their families are deciding whether to invest in formal education. Although there are some problems with the comparability of World Bank/UN figures, these sources were selected on the basis of relatively consistent

calculation and regular measurement, as well as accessibility. Statistics provided by the Ethiopian government are also of questionable reliability, and lack comparability with international figures, but can provide illuminating contrasts to the more prominent sources, as well as alternative indicators of participation and provision. Where national figures were available and contradict the World Bank/UN sources, discrepancies were noted and investigated.

3.4.3 Analysis of government policy

As well as education statistics, national education and development strategies, policies and curricula were analysed. As already demonstrated, people's understandings and actions are limited by the discourses available to them (Sayer, 2000). National education policies not only promote the idea that children *should* go to school, but also – both implicitly and explicitly – assert specific reasons for this being the case. These documents were therefore analysed in order to identify the key purposes and functions that the Ethiopian government was ascribing to primary education, enabling the research to consider the extent to which children in Hawassa's understandings of their education and motivations for going to school were rooted in and limited by these national agendas. At the same time, the impact of government policy goes beyond the discursive. The analysis in this thesis also considers the legislative, economic and political conditions that the Ethiopian government has implemented in order to encourage children to go to school, and examines the ways in which these generative mechanisms were interacting to generate children in Hawassa's understandings and behaviours (Bhaskar, 1978). These policy documents are made public by the Ethiopian government on their own

online portal¹, and are also varyingly hosted by the IMF, World Bank and UNESCO.

3.5 Analysis and coding

The analysis of research data was iterative and ongoing. Quantitative data was compiled, analysed and consolidated in Microsoft Excel, and all qualitative data sources were entered into NVivo and coded thematically. The coding scheme was developed primarily from the research with children in Hawassa, in order to reflect children's perspectives and priorities. For instance, the three categories used to structure the data chapters of this thesis – going to school to become a good worker, a good person and a good citizen – arose from the initial analysis of focus group data, and were verified and expanded upon in the child conferences. However, children did not engage in the critical analysis of government policy and other generative mechanisms. Additional categories were developed with reference to the secondary research literature regarding education in Africa and elsewhere, as well as theoretical ideas from the sociologies of childhood and education, critical realism and the human capabilities approach.

Drawing together findings from interpretive research with children and analysis of the discursive, relational, institutional and material structures shaping their lives, accessed 'the critical power of sociological analysis', which 'lies precisely in its capacity to deconstruct apparent senselessness' (Warming, 2011: 46). Rather than simply reproducing children's narratives and representing them as

¹ <http://www.ethiopia.gov.et>

especially authentic, or 'true', the analysis in this thesis explores how children's understandings and motivations were shaped by real causal mechanisms acting in all four of Bhaskar's (2008) planes of being. It thus produces a coherent, critical and in depth account of the moral concerns and external enablements and constraints shaping children in Hawassa's school attendance, and considers how going to school might be expanding and constraining children's valued capabilities. By ruling out other possible explanations and by observing patterns of causality, it draws conclusions that are grounded in empirical evidence, but that go beyond children's own explanations to demonstrate the real forces shaping their lives (Sayer, 2000; Stige *et al.*, 2009).

3.6 Ethics

The methodological justification of research design and the appraisal of research ethics are inextricable. 'Ethical' methods add to the value of research, but more importantly establishing that the research questions are worth asking, that the methods used are fit for purpose, and that the research will produce sufficient and appropriate data to support the knowledge claims being made is essential in order to assert both the ethicality as well as validity of any research project (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998: 336). The literature review in Chapter Two of this thesis established the necessity of a new approach to understanding why children in contemporary urban Ethiopia should and do go to school, explaining the ways in which 'listening to children' can enhance the validity of our knowledge about why children to school, but asserting that this interpretive approach needs to be complimented with critical sociological analysis in order

to locate these understandings and motives within the real structures shaping children's lives. The discussion in this chapter has set out how the methods chosen were suitable to this enquiry.

Even where the research design is appropriate and justified, however, ethical challenges still arise and demand addressing in all social research. The following discussion describes the strategies adopted throughout the design and implementation of this research in order to ensure professional and ethical standards were upheld (BSA, 2002). It begins by considering the particular power relations that can shape research with children, and sets out the ways in which these imbalances materialised and were addressed in this particular research encounter. The following sections then address in detail some specific ethical issues that arose during the interpretive research with children in Hawassa, including those surrounding consent, confidentiality, anonymity and protection from harm, and the strategies that were employed in order to address these issues. Following this, the discussion moves on to the ethical issues encountered decisions made in relation to my participant observation and analysis of public documents. Finally, it details the steps taken to protect myself, as researcher, from harm in this project, and considers the impact of certain events that took place in the field.

3.6.1 Power relations in research with children

The inferior status and autonomy attributed to children almost universally means that the unequal power relations present in all research relationships can become amplified when conducting research with children. In Ethiopia,

child-adult relations are particularly authoritarian and patriarchal (Alemayehu, 2007). Reinforcing such inequality can manipulate and do harm to the children that the research is intended to benefit (Johnston, 2008; Punch, 2002).

My research was guided by the principle of the democratic allocation of power. Following in the footsteps of many childhood researchers, I employed the 'participatory' research tools discussed above in attempt to move away from 'adult' forms of communication that can exclude children from participation and reinforce the imbalances of power that typically characterise relationships between adults and children, and between researcher and researched (Johnston 2008; Warming 2011). In many instances I felt that children really enjoyed and benefitted from being actively listened to, having their ideas positively received and reinforced, and being encouraged to verify or challenge my 'adult' conclusions.

Children's voices are often systematically marginalised through the denial of adult status and privileges to people under the age of eighteen. In African societies, this is often despite the many responsibilities that children and young people hold and the contributions that they make in society (De Boeck and Honwana, 2005; Twum-Danso, 2010). Social research such as this can provide a unique opportunity for children to be listened to and respected by adults, as well as to contribute to public discourse about issues and decisions which directly affect their lives (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). This subversion of generational power relations has the potential to be emancipatory and transformative (Fox, 2013; Gallacher and Gallagher, 2008). However, this

research was not radically participatory. With reference to Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, this was a consultation and not an instance of 'citizen control'. The research agenda for this study was set by myself as researcher, rather than my participants, and did not arise out of the concerns of children themselves, but was initiated from adult, academic interests. Although the research questions evolved over time and were shaped by children's priorities, the overarching research problem was pre-decided, as necessitated by the time constraints and ethical approval processes involved in conducting doctoral research. Aside from the child-to-child interviews, in which children were able to decide their own questions, it was I who was consulting, and children who were being consulted. If it had been schoolchildren in Hawassa themselves who had designed and conducted a research project about their lives, the questions asked and data produced would likely have been different.

The context in which research activities took place also constrained the extent to which this research work was truly participatory. As previously discussed, access to children was gained through their schools. For the most part, focus groups, interviews and child conferences took place in school libraries and disused classrooms; situations of established power relations between adults and children that will have shaped our research interactions (Fox, 2013). In this context, children expected – and seemed to want – me to take charge of the situation, and to come with prepared and engaging materials and activities. Participants in all four schools had experience of foreign volunteers who came to teach them or to 'do' art and drama at their schools, and this provided the

model for their expectations of me. Although this reinforced generational power imbalances in some ways, it did at least mean that children did not seem to feel obliged to interact with me in the very formal and didactic way in which they did with their Ethiopian teachers. It did seem at certain moments that children might be giving socially desirable responses that they expected foreign outsiders to deem acceptable, but these interactions provided interesting data, as will become apparent in later chapters of this thesis. Being an 'outsider', I was also able to ask questions that might have seemed nonsensical coming from an Ethiopian researcher. Not being a child, and never having been a child growing up in Ethiopia, I was able to start from 'square one'; asking children to share with me what it was like to go to school in Hawassa, and what was important to them.

In line with the difficulties experienced by other researchers and practitioners attempting to implement children's right to participation in certain societies in the Global South (Dentith *et al.*, 2009; Twum-Danso, 2010), I also found in Hawassa that consulting children was not generally seen as necessary or desirable. Children who expressed controversial views or acted in an assertive manner could be perceived as disrespectful and deviant, and these social norms meant that children were reluctant to criticise their schooling, or to think about alternative ways of being. Moreover, I encountered difficulties in convincing Ethiopian interpreters that children were capable of addressing complex and abstract issues in research sessions, and these adults' reluctance to engage children in 'critical thinking' on some occasions limited the extent to which

sessions could be truly participatory. Interpreters' failure to impart enthusiasm on participants was sometimes a problem, and their scornful reactions to some children's contributions introduced real ethical problems in two focus group sessions. Although I did not subscribe to the 'orthodox', positivist view of the interpreter as a 'neutral mouthpiece' whose 'bias' should be avoided (Temple and Edwards, 2002: 5), I did not wish to hand over 'control' of my research to these interpreters, and was concerned that their attitudes would deny children the chance to share their valid opinions and experiences. After my initial consternation, I was able to address this issue by taking time to explain my 'participatory' approach and expectations of the research process to the interpreters, but the presence of Ethiopian adults and their normative expectations of children will have impacted on the research process. In line with Temple and Edwards' (2002: 6) notion of 'triple subjectivity', I appreciated the need to account for the role that interpreters played in producing knowledge in this research, as well as those played by myself as researcher and my participants. Again, this reflexive stance in fact enabled me to explore interesting aspects of the data produced in research encounters, for example in the contrasts between what children were willing and perhaps felt obliged to say in the presence of different adults, as well as in the beliefs that adults held with regard to children's incapacity for 'critical thinking'.

From a more pragmatic perspective, the use of interpreters was hugely advantageous in terms of facilitating access to children. If all research activities had been conducted in English this research would only have accessed a very

small sample of privileged children, likely to share rather specific experiences of education. This was a matter of ethics as well as validity, as using interpreters mitigated the risk of excluding children who were less proficient in communicating in English. A risk in conducting 'participatory' research with children is that performative activities can privilege certain children's 'voices' and actions over others, reproducing 'symbolic violence' by excluding children who were more introverted or less proficient in communicating in the chosen language (Warming, 2011: 48). The use of interpreters, and the use of a range of research tools, from which children could pick and choose, was vital in mitigating this risk. Even those children who did speak good English were able to participate more fully because they had the opportunity to express themselves in their own language.

Although many of the children involved in the research reported that they had enjoyed taking part and being listened to, it is not appropriate to make any claims as to the empowering effects of this process in their everyday lives. Listening to children's experiences and views does not necessarily mean that their priorities will be translated into real social change or policy creation and it was ethically imperative not to raise children's expectations about what this project was going to do in terms of transforming their education. At the same time, it is important to recognise that children growing up in Hawassa and elsewhere may not all desire to be 'empowered' by participatory research initiated by adults (Strocka, 2008).

3.6.2 Informed consent

Informed consent is an important ethical consideration, and can be more complex when conducting research with children rather than adults (Campbell, 2008; Cocks, 2006; Roberts, 2000; Thomas and O'Kane, 1998). In order to give informed consent, a person must be informed, be able to express an informed view, and have that view taken into account when decisions about their participation are made, or indeed be the main decision-maker (Alderson, 2007: 2277). Giving informed consent therefore requires levels of mental competence and autonomy that have not always been present in modern imaginings of 'the child'. Given the evidence of children's competence discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, young participants' capacity for giving informed consent was taken, in the first instance, 'on trust', rather than waiting for individual children to prove their adequacy (Alderson, 2007: 2278). *Appendix 5* shows the very simple consent form signed by all children who took part, which was explained to them in Amharic. However, informed consent was an ongoing, reflexive process, and not a simple or one-off formality. Children were invited to decide if and how they wanted to partake in the research, and were also asked if there were any particular ways in which they wanted to produce data, for example filming each other or producing a book. Although participants did not put forward any of their own ideas about how the research should progress, and wished for me to maintain control in this sense, some did choose to opt out of particular activities, including producing dramas and conducting child-to-child interviews.

Conducting research within the school setting raised the risk that children might appear to be willingly consenting to taking part in the research, but actually be

doing so because of their experiences of compulsion and requirement in this authoritative educational environment. However, some children did choose to terminate their participation, indicating that they felt able to be in control of their consent and dissent (Robson, 2001: 137). I did sense that some children might have felt obliged to attend sessions, despite my constant checking that they were happy to be there, but again these students were able to limit their participation to a level that they were comfortable with. However, children were not the only, and perhaps not even the 'main' decision-makers in determining their participation (Alderson, 2007: 2277). In order to access children in their schools, it was necessary to go through adults gatekeepers who held 'social power' over them (Fox, 2013), in the form of their head teachers. It was initially planned that the orphanage staff with whom I was going to work would act as ethical gatekeepers, providing knowledge of both individual children and local norms and values. However, as it became clear that this sampling strategy was inappropriate I decided – after discussion with the school head teachers and other advisors – that it was most appropriate to obtain consent from children and their schools. All of the school head teachers approached were happy for me to work with their children, but as indicated above one did place constraints upon this access. The head teacher of Adare school did not allow the youngest children in her school to take part in the research, on the basis that they were too young and that their schooling should not be disrupted. Such an occurrence is not uncommon in research with children, where children's consent is often emphasised but for the most part occurs only after adults' approval (Powell and Smith, 2009). Dominant

discourses that construct children as the property of adults, including for example their teachers or their parents, mean that children can be denied their potential need or desire for participation (Campbell, 2008: 37). It was only by working within these discourses that this research was able to proceed.

In contrast to the importance of head teachers in facilitating access, parental consent was not required in order for children to participate in this research. Many children in Ethiopia are orphaned and/or living with illiterate caregivers and hence it was anticipated that obtaining written parental consent would not always be feasible nor desirable, since asking someone who cannot read or write to sign a consent form seems both pointless and potentially degrading. It also transpired that the schools did not expect or demand parents' permission for their children to take part. Despite this, parental consent will have had some informal influence on children's attendance at the child conferences, as some children will have been disallowed from attending these sessions that took place outside of school hours. Parents may also have discouraged children's participation at home. On the other hand, the fact that it would have been possible for some children to have attended the child conferences without telling their parents is illustrative of the autonomy and freedom to go where they pleased that was afforded to such children. This independence is precisely why I felt it most important, and sufficient, to obtain consent from the young participants themselves. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research, and told repeatedly that their participation must be voluntary, and

that they could choose to stop participating at any time. As indicated above, some did choose to do so.

3.6.3 Confidentiality, anonymity and protection from harm

Talking about why they went to school was not a topic that was likely to get children in trouble, or to be an uncomfortable issue for participants to address, because – as will be demonstrated throughout this thesis – most children in Hawassa were encouraged to go to school and expected to want to do so. This lack of controversy surrounding the research topic meant that it was deemed unnecessary to anonymise participants. In fact, given the aforementioned importance of valuing children's contribution to research projects, I felt that it was important to give my young participants' the option to be named in the dissemination of the research. The majority of children wished to be acknowledged in the dissemination, and many wanted to have their name and photograph included in my 'book'. Some wished to have their name used, but not their image, and four did not wish to be named. These requests have all been honoured, and synonyms have been used to anonymise those children who did not wish to be named. As the head teachers of the four schools wished for their schools to be acknowledged and named in dissemination, steps have been taken to ensure that quotes from those four children who did not wish to be named could not be identified if someone they knew was to read any research outputs. This anonymity is also aided by the time that has passed between the fieldwork and research dissemination. It is very unlikely that the parents or caregivers of any of my participants will encounter reports of this research. However, if they were to do so, I do not expect that any of the

findings or quotes are controversial enough to pose a danger to the child. Due to the nature of focus group research, participants in these sessions were aware that their classmates were privy to any comments they made in group sessions, and so confidentiality was severely limited. Furthermore, it is important to recognise here that although it is important to remain reflexive about researcher positionality, and to ensure that consent is as informed as possible, power imbalances within research relationships do not always fall one way. It is misguided to assume that simply because a certain individual or group of people is/are children, or non-Western, or 'the researched', they are inherently powerless. In fact, research participants hold the ultimate power in deciding what they wish to disclose or remain silent about, and in determining whether a research project 'works' at all. It would be detrimental to the children who took part in this research to assume that they did not self-censor, and although this may have interfered with validity of the data in some sense, interesting data was produced with regard to what participants sensed were socially acceptable reasons for going to school, and were willing to say in front of different adults.

3.6.4 Observational data

Ethnography can potentially be even more exploitative than traditional positivist research, in that close engagement with one's participants enhances the potential for manipulation, betrayal or representation (Stacey, 1988).

Interpretivist researchers have long recognised that it is impossible to escape subjectivity in the form of interpretation and evaluation when employing ethnographic methods, where ultimately it is the researcher who selects and narrates the data (Chase, 1996; Holstein and Gubrium, 1997; Stacey, 1988).

However, my realist perspective leads me to believe that we can know about other people's lives, and that we can come to understand the mechanisms shaping them (Crang and Cook, 2007). Although the realist approach to social research acknowledges that 'truth is negotiated through dialogue', that a researcher's perspective and values will always influence the account that they produce, and thus that a single, perfectly objective representation of a phenomenon will never be produced, research should and can aspire to be as objective and 'truthful' as possible through the use of rigorous data collection and analysis (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006; see also Porter, 2007). The analysis of this research strove towards objectivity and 'epistemic gain' (Sayer, 2004: 8) by challenging, discounting and improving upon alternative, existing explanations of children's school attendance.

Conducting rigorous research then, limited the potential for misrepresentation and betrayal of the people whose lives I observed in Hawassa. However, the idea of informed consent was more problematic in this instance than in the conducting of 'formal' research activities. Although I explained to everyone I met in Hawassa that I was conducting research about why children went to school, I have drawn on events that happened to those living around me without their explicit consent to be 'researched'. The anecdotes I have used are illustrative precisely because they are 'typical' of children's lives in Hawassa as I observed it, and as names, dates and details that would make these people identifiable have been omitted it would not be possible for any reader to recognise the people concerned. On the other hand, these participants did not

have the same opportunity to reply to or challenge my conclusions afforded to the young participants who took part in focus groups and interviews (Crang and Cook, 2007).

3.6.5 Analysis of public documents

The primary ethical concerns in the critical analysis of statistics, policy and other public documents largely revolve around the validity and reliability of sources used, points already addressed in this chapter. As public documents, government strategies are open to and in fact should invite external scrutiny. The analysis of policy documents in this research did not therefore raise ethical concerns with regards to confidentiality or consent. On the other hand, the misconstruing of government strategies and their impact on children's lives would be unethical. Once again the principle of excluding other explanations was relied upon in order to ensure the rigour of analysis and knowledge claims about children's lives (Porter, 2007; Sayer, 2000, 2004).

3.6.6 Potential for harm to the researcher

A risk assessment was completed before the fieldwork in Hawassa began. This assessment summarised anticipated risks of physical and emotional harm, and strategies to mitigate these risks. For example, I was to take anti-malarials to lower the risk of contracting malaria, drink only bottled water, and avoid carrying valuables where at all possible. It was also agreed that when travelling to the research site it was important that there were people awaiting my arrival, and that I was always able to be in contact with the UK via telephone. I also planned strategies for dealing with people who might ask me for money or

assistance, and for setting boundaries in my relationships with those I was working with and others around me.

As is inevitable, this risk assessment was useful, but did not cover all eventualities. In the first few months of my stay in Hawassa, I fell in an open sewer during a citywide power outage and, weeks later, contracted malaria. Fortunately, thanks to good medical care I recovered from these incidents quickly and without complication. However, being on crutches for six weeks and then living with an impaired immune system for the remainder of my first round of fieldwork did limit the time that I was able to spend moving around the city, talking to people and coming to understand life in Hawassa. This was further exacerbated by a problem that I had not fully anticipated before coming to live in Hawassa. As a lone, young white woman in the city I was extremely vulnerable to unwanted attention from local men. This included sexual advances, jeering and being followed around the town. There are tensions between locals and foreigners in Hawassa, and although many people are extremely welcoming to guests, there is an overriding suspicion of Westerners who might be coming to interfere in local life in varying ways. I often experienced mothers encouraging their children to shout 'foreigner' at me as I passed in the street, and even had stones thrown at me. However, the most unpleasant experience for me was the unwanted sexual attention that I experienced on a daily basis, from *bajaj* (tuktuk) drivers, workers on the streets and even teachers from the schools where I had been working. Although I never came to any serious harm, I did find this harassment very intimidating,

and it certainly prevented me from spending as much time in public as I would have liked. This limited the data that I was able to gather in Hawassa, and illustrates that fact that power imbalances between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ and ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ do not always fall one way. On the other hand, experiencing this intimidation opened my eyes to the ways in which women are perceived in Hawassa, and the pressures and expectations that girls growing up and attending school in this context might want to escape and/or fulfil. I spent time with young women who laughed about having to pretend they were old or ‘disabled’ whilst walking home at night, in order to avoid being followed and raped. My aversion to spending time alone in public also led me to spend many hours in the company of other women and children in one of the poorest areas of the city, where I was lent a house. Despite our lack of common language, these women welcomed me into their community, and not only did this space provide safety and refuge, it also allowed me to come to a far deeper understanding of the lives of children growing up in Hawassa. This understanding helped make sense of the factors shaping children’s desires to go to school.

3.7 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has explained how this research went about exploring why children in Hawassa attended school, what they expected to gain from it, and the factors that were shaping these motivations. It has demonstrated that the combination of ‘listening to children’ with critical analysis of the generative mechanisms shaping their lives is appropriate to a

critical realist ontology, which understands human behaviour as shaped by both moral concerns and external generative mechanisms. It has made explicit the ways in which such an approach might address the limitations of the currently dominant understandings about why children in this context and more generally should and do go to school set out in Chapter Two, and has demonstrated that this was carried out in an ethical and appropriate manner.

The following four chapters present the findings and conclusions of this research. The analysis begins in Chapter Four, which analyses the political and institutional structures that acted as generative mechanisms shaping children's school attendance. These mechanisms include the many political and legal strategies that the Ethiopian government, with the encouragement of the international community, has pursued in order to get more children into school. The analysis in following chapters then appraises in detail children in Hawassa's motivations to go to school, which largely centred around their overlapping objectives of being able to get good jobs, to become good people and to 'help' Ethiopia.

Chapter Four: Going to school in the EPRDF's Ethiopia

4.1 Introduction

The research discussed in this thesis investigated the following research question:

In the urban African context of Hawassa, Ethiopia, what motivates children to go to school, and to what extent do children's explanations of their schooling correspond with dominant arguments for universal primary education?

In Chapter Two, the existing theoretical and empirical literature that has sought to explain if and why children should and do attend school was reviewed and critiqued. This critique demonstrated the limits to current answers to these questions. It highlighted the need for a new approach to understanding why children go to school that includes children's voices in these important debates about what education is and should be for, and yet recognises the impact of external constraints upon children's understandings and actions. The discussion of methodology in Chapter Three then set out how this investigation combined primary research with children in Hawassa with critical analysis of government policy and social statistics in order to come to such an understanding with regards to children in Hawassa's school attendance.

The analysis in Chapters Five to Seven of this thesis draws upon primary data gathered in fieldwork in Hawassa and analysis of government policy and social statistics in order to answer the questions set out in Chapter One:

- Q1 What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school, and what do they expect to gain from their education?*
- Q2 To what extent are these reasons for going to school consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses about the purposes and value of education?*
- Q3 What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?*
- Q4 To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?*

Before that, the analysis in this initial data chapter examines some of the generative mechanisms that were shaping children in Ethiopia's school attendance more generally, specifically in the arena of institutional and legal frameworks.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the view that children go to school only because they are compelled to do so, or because it is expected of them, neglects the fact that children are often actively involved in decision-making about their education. On the other hand, the assumption that human beings are entirely rational, economic actors, and that children's school attendance is a result of their – or their parents' – rational evaluation of the costs and gains associated with going to school is also flawed. The analysis in this thesis therefore seeks to understand children's school attendance as an act of agency that is dependent upon both their ultimate, 'moral' concerns, and external constraints and

enablements that act as 'generative mechanisms' (Bhaskar, 2008). To this end, the discussion in this chapter analyses the institutional and legal structures that children in Hawassa's school attendance presupposed, arguing that children's school attendance cannot be understood without reference to the structures that their government has put in place in order to encourage their participation in formal education. The chapter begins with a review of the ways in which the EPRDF government's approach to education has differed from that adopted by preceding regimes. The specific strategies that this government had, by the time of the research, employed in order to expand educational provision are then set out in detail. Analysis of these policies considers the ways in which they constitute generative mechanisms that shaped children in Hawassa's propensity to go to school. The impact of global as well as national and local forces in shaping these policies, and thus in encouraging children in Hawassa to go to school, is also considered.

4.2 Education in modern Ethiopia

At the time that this research took place, Ethiopia was ruled by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front [EPRDF]. At the time of writing, following the May 2015 national elections, this is still the case, and so the analysis in the chapter speaks of the EPRDF regime as current and ongoing. The party has been in power since overthrowing the communist Derg regime in the early 1990s, and has made education a central policy priority.

The EPRDF'S approach to education can only be understood with reference and in contrast to those of preceding regimes. There have been three distinct eras

of government and governance in Ethiopia since the Emperor Haile Selassie came to power in 1940, marking the end of the Italian occupation, and these regimes have translated into notably different understandings and implementations of the education system.

Under the imperial regime, education in Ethiopia was limited to a small, urban minority. Some commentators, such as Negash (2006: 12), maintain that this was the 'golden age' of education in Ethiopia, on the basis of the Emperor Selassie's faith in education as central to progress and 'modernisation', the presence of indicators of 'quality' education such as educated, well-paid teachers and small class sizes, and an initially close association between educational qualifications and career success. However, when education became more widespread in the late 1960s and early 1970s, unemployment began to rise as the public sector became unable to absorb growing number of secondary school graduates. Moreover, the modern education system that was modeled on Western provision was widely perceived to be irrelevant to the lives of normal Ethiopians in this era (ODI, 2011: 5). It was also opposed by the highly powerful Orthodox Church (ODI, 2011: 5).

After a period of social and political rebellion in response to the Emperor Haile Selassie's famine denial, increasing costs of living and high rates of unemployment, an uprising spearheaded by politicised university students, unemployed secondary graduates and discontented military personnel led to the abolishment of the imperial system in Ethiopia in 1974. Ethiopia was declared a republic, to be ruled by the socialist Derg, later becoming the

communist Workers' Party of Ethiopia. Inspired by Soviet communism, the government socialised the economy and sought to cut all ties with the West. For this regime, education was fundamental in fostering communist ideology among the youngest generation, and the curriculum was highly politicised (ODI, 2011: 5). The government recruited only Ethiopian teachers, discouraged teaching in English and rejected from the curriculum any ideals perceived to be 'Western'. Education was geared towards scientific and technological production and research, in order to 'secure productive citizens' and to bolster a self-sufficient regime that was not dependent on assistance from the West (Negash, 2006: 18). Most importantly, this government sought to expand educational provision to the Ethiopian masses. Strategies to achieve this objective included the introduction of a shift system that enabled children to attend school in either the afternoon or the morning, and thus to combine education with their domestic, agricultural or other paid work, and the recruitment of local teachers, who were often unqualified. Although education was largely of extremely low quality, particularly with regards to the qualification levels of teachers, significant increases in participation were achieved in the first years of the communist regime (Negash, 2006; ODI, 2010: 5). However, throughout the 1980s famine, social unrest and the government's use of hunger as a political weapon resulted in a decline in access to education.

The Derg had intended to prove that the imperial regime was to blame for the high levels of unemployment in Ethiopia, but in fact under this socialist regime almost everyone became uniformly poor (Negash, 2006: 22; ODI, 2005: 5). After

over a decade of famine, corruption, militarisation and political repression, the Derg were defeated in 1991 by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front [EPRDF], a coalition of insurgent ethno-nationalist movements led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front [TPLF]. The communist regime was replaced by a Transitional Government, and in 1994 Ethiopia was officially transformed from a nation state dominated by one political party into a 'voluntary federation' of the over-80 ethnic groups in the country, to be known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [FDRE] (Abbink, 2011: 597). Ethiopia continues to be governed by a three-tiered system of federalism. The federal government consists of the House of People's Representatives and the House of Federation, elected every five years, with policy and fiscal decision-making decentralised to the nation's nine ethnically based administrative regions and two self-governing city administrations, which are in turn divided into districts or *woredas*. With regard to education, although much responsibility for planning and delivery is supposedly devolved to regional governments and even *woredas*, students around the country study a national curriculum that prepares them for nationally standardised exams. Furthermore, regional and local education departments are guided by the national government's priorities through the mechanisms of national education structures and strategies (MoE, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2010; TGE, 1994).

The education system in Ethiopia has for the last two decades been shaped by the EPRDF government's subscription to a pro-market, neoliberal model of development. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this approach has been

at least highly encouraged by international actors such as the World Bank and IMF. The party has repeatedly asserted that education is fundamental to the country's 'development', and – in contrast to the communist regime's inward-looking approach – largely depicts that development in terms of the furthering of Ethiopia's competitiveness in the global market (MFED 2005; MoE, 2005, 2010). In this way, and as will be discussed in depth in Chapter Five, the EPRDF government's understanding of the value of formal schooling largely reflects the orthodox, human capital approach to education.

Since coming to power in the early 1990s, the EPRDF government has implemented a policy framework that seeks to make it ideologically 'normal' and practically more likely for children to go to school. This framework will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. When the EPRDF officially came to power in 1994, less than one in five children of primary school age were enrolled in education and the 'normal' place for the child was in the home or at work (UNESCO, 2014). By 2011, the year before the fieldwork for this research began, the World Bank and UNESCO estimate that the majority (87 per cent) of Ethiopian children of primary school age were enrolled (UNESCO, 2014). The Ethiopian government reports a very similar net enrolment rate [NER] of 86 per cent for the academic year 2012/13, when this research took place (MoE, 2013). This extraordinary rise in the country's NER means that, from a very low starting point in the early 1990s, Ethiopia has come to overtake the average enrolment rates for both sub-Saharan Africa [SSA] and low-income countries around the globe (UNESCO, 2014). UNESCO report that the number of Ethiopian children

out of school fell by seventy five percent between 1999 and 2011 (UNESCO, 2014).

4.3 Government efforts encouraging children to go to school

The concerted efforts that the EPRDF government has made to expand the reach of education can be seen in the significant fiscal commitments it has made to the education sector. *Table 5* reveals the increasing proportion of government expenditure allocated to education in Ethiopia between 2000 and 2010. In the 2010 Education Sector Development Program the government set a target of 21 per cent of the national budget and 25 per cent of regional budgets to be spent on education, with 37 per cent of this allocated to primary education.

Table 5: Public spending on education, total (per cent of government expenditure)

Source: Ethiopia Public Finance Review (World Bank, 2010)

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
%	11.3	13.8	-	-	-	-	17.5	23.3	22.8	23.6	25.4

On the basis that the above increases in educational participation have directly resulted from the EPRDF's investments in education, the party's record on education has often been held up as a 'success story' and an example of best practice by the international community (Green, 2010; IRIN, 2010; Save the Children, 2012; UN, 2010). The UK Department for International Development, for example, focusing largely on educational expenditure although also on other sectors, have named Ethiopia's 'the most pro-poor budget in Africa' (Dom, 2009: xi). It is important to bear in the mind the issues regarding the

questionable reliability and comparability of enrolment and participation statistics discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis. There have been discrepancies in the enrolment figures reported for Ethiopia, and many of the official figures are estimates. Some figures published by the World Bank and UNESCO seem to have been retracted. Furthermore, these statistics, even if reliable, cannot indicate causality, and do not prove a direct causal relationship between certain policies and increases in enrolment. The analysis in the next three chapters of this thesis will uncover many other generative mechanisms operating on all four of Bhaskar's (2008) 'planes of being', beyond these individual policies, which were encouraging school attendance in urban Ethiopia. Nonetheless, government policies put into place the material and institutional structures that children's school attendance depends upon, as well as powerful discourses that might encourage children to want to go to school. The following discussion therefore reviews the specific mechanisms that the Ethiopian government has implemented in order to expand the reach of primary education provision in the country, and will consider these as generative mechanisms with the power to enable children's school attendance. These strategies have for the most part been implemented through the government's initial Education and Training Policy [ETP] (TGE, 1994), and four Education Sector Development Programs [ESDPs] (MoE, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2010).

The government's primary step in expanding the reach of formal education was to address the financial barriers to participation. In 1994, the year that the

constitution was adopted and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia came into existence, the EPRDF abolished school fees for grades 1-10 (TGE, 1994). Education has also been opened up to private providers in order to free up government investment for provision for those students unable to afford private education. According to UNESCO statistics 11 per cent of the 14.3 million students enrolled in primary schools in Ethiopia in 2010 were enrolled in private institutions (UNESCO, 2014b). This trend of privatisation has been observed throughout sub-Saharan Africa and across the majority world (UNESCO, 2015). The validity of these figures is questionable, however, as UNESCO reported an unlikely, dramatic decrease to just 4 per cent of primary school students being in private schools in 2012 (UNESCO, 2014b). UNESCO's failure to acknowledge the rapid growth of private schools in the global South has been criticised in recent years (Stanfield, 2013). Despite the fact that government schools are likely to be more prevalent in rural areas, by all accounts private schools are being built and expanded in Ethiopia at a far faster rate than government schools, and so the decrease from 11 to 4 per cent of children being enrolled in private institutions between 2010 and 2012 seems improbable. In Hawassa for example, at the end of 2014, there were over 120 private schools and around 30 government schools. Moreover, the population of these private schools was growing rapidly. Union Academy, one of the private schools featured in this research, reported a growth in numbers of students from less than 600 at the start of 2012 to over 3500 students at the end of 2014.

Whether in the public or private sector, getting more children into school has required building more classrooms and schools. The latest ESDP reported that between 2004/05 and 2008/09 the number of primary schools in Ethiopia rose from 16,513 to 25,217, representing an average annual growth rate of 11 per cent and resulting largely from the national 'low cost construction policy', which encouraged the use of local materials and the participation of local communities in building new schools and classrooms (MoE, 2010: 30). The government has also needed to recruit and train more teachers in order to teach more children. UNESCO statistics indicate that in 2012 there were almost 200,000 more teachers in Ethiopian primary schools than there were in 1994 when the government came to power – a more than threefold increase (UNESCO, 2014b).

The EPRDF government has also implemented legal frameworks in attempts to ensure that children go to school. The Ministry of Education heralded the 2010 ESDP as an 'historic landmark', as it made primary education compulsory as well as free (MoE, 2010: 12). However, a teacher in Hawassa confirmed that although participation in primary schooling (grades one to eight) was legally 'compulsory', and families were 'pressured' to send their children to school (note his assumption about who had the power to make that decision), no sanctions would be enforced if households in Hawassa failed to do so. This strategy can therefore be understood as an instance of 'soft' power rather than coercion. Lukes' (1974) concept of the 'third face' of power is also useful here. Lukes discussed the way in which elites, including the government, have the

power to establish norms and ideologies so powerful that they lead people to act in a certain way seemingly without thinking about it, even when that behaviour goes against what is in their best interests (Lukes, 1974). Although compulsory primary education might not be strictly enforced in Ethiopia, the law has ideological power in determining school as the appropriate activity for children. Laws limiting children's engagement in activities seen to be alternatives to education have similarly cemented the notion that the school is the correct arena for contemporary Ethiopian childhoods. The Ethiopian Labour Law proclamation no. 377/2003 prohibits work under the age of 14 (the official age of primary completion), whilst the Family Law proclamation no. 213/2000 outlaws marriage before the age of 18.

Although children under the age of 14 are officially forbidden from working, the EPRDF government has also continued the 'shift' system that was introduced by the previous, communist regime in order to allow children to combine school with domestic and/or economic labour. This system means that students only have to attend school for half of the day and, as well as increasing the numbers of students that individual schools can serve, attempts to address an assumed pay-off between children's schooling and work based on the economic, rational model of human behaviour described in Chapter Two of this thesis. The EPRDF government, with significant support from international institutions and NGOs and as part of the third ESDP (MoE, 2005), also introduced Alternative Basic Education [ABE] in order to facilitate the combination of school and work among children for whom even the shift system does not constitute a suitable

arrangement. ABE uses innovative structures of delivery, flexible school days and adjusted term times to try and extend provision to some of the most 'hard to reach' groups, who live in especially marginalised regions and who primarily come from pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities (MoE, 2010: 32).

The 2010 ESDP asserted the importance of making sure that children who have benefited from ABE transition successfully into further learning, and proposes the construction of mobile schools and boarding schools to provide education for nomadic communities (MoE, 2010: 46). Teaching in local languages has also been introduced in primary schools, with the intention of raising relevance and inclusiveness and thus furthering the reach of formal provision (ODI, 2011: 18).

As well as regional disparities in participation, attempts have been made to address inequalities between rich and poor households and communities.

World Food Programme sponsored school feeding initiatives, for example, have been placed in 'chronically vulnerable' regions with particularly exaggerated disparities in participation, in order to encourage children's education. Material support and scholarships for children from especially poor households and with 'special' needs have also been encouraged in the 2010 ESDP (MoE, 2010: 32). As

discussed in Chapter Three, schools in Hawassa were offering such scholarships.

This is an important recognition on the government's part of the extra resources needed for impoverished and disabled children to convert the resource of free education into personal freedoms or capabilities, although it is left to individual schools to put this into practice.

The enrolment disparity that the government has arguably worked most hard to tackle and has made most progress in addressing is that of gender. In line with the third Millennium Development Goal of ‘promoting gender equality and empowering women’, the government has set targets for gender equality in enrolment at all levels of the education system (MoE, 2010). As well as protecting girls’ right to schooling by outlawing child marriage, the government has taken action to support girls’ access and retention in education, including building latrines, encouraging schools to implement girls’ clubs and female counselors and promoting ‘gender-sensitive teaching methods’ (MoE, 2010: 34, ODI, 2011: 17). The government is also pushing *woredas* and schools to employ affirmative action policies in order to increase the numbers of female teachers and leaders in schools (MoE, 2010). The party itself is also committed to employing women in the civil sector in attempt to provide positive employment role models for girls (ODI, 2011: 17). Gender parity in primary school enrolment has greatly improved in Ethiopia, with nine girls enrolled for every 10 boys in 2011, compared to ratio of seven for every 10 in 1999 (UNESCO, 2014).

In recent years, education policy in Ethiopia has shifted in focus from expanding provision to improving ‘quality and relevance’ (MoE, 2008, 2010). As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, the colossal increases in Ethiopian enrolment discussed above are said to have led to a ‘persistent decline of pedagogical conditions’ since the EPRDF came to power in the early nineties (World Bank, 2005: xxiv). In particular, enrolment expansion has led to a decline in real spending per pupil, despite the increase in government spending allocated to

the sector. This decline in spending per pupil has been linked to a number of problems including a prevalence of poor quality classrooms, a lack of textbooks and other educational materials, and a continuation with an inappropriate and ineffective curriculum (Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; Roschanski, 2007; Woodhead, 2009; World Bank, 2005: xxiv). Other indicators of poor quality in primary education that have been particularly highlighted include astonishingly high pupil-teacher ratios and the employment of inadequately trained teachers (Negash, 2006; Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; World Bank, 2009). The average pupil-teacher ratio in Ethiopian primary schools peaked in 2000 at 67, and although this ratio had reduced to 54 in 2012, the government is still focusing efforts on training new teachers in order to reduce class sizes and ensure that children are taught by qualified teachers (MoE, 2010). For the academic year 2009/10, the government reported that only 39 per cent of primary teachers were appropriately qualified (MoE, 2010). Interestingly, in the same year the ODI reported that 'around 90%' of grade 1-4 teachers and more than 70 per cent of grade 5-8 teachers held the required certification (ODI, 2011: 9). However, it seems that the ODI figures are based on old standards for teacher training. Teachers in Ethiopia have traditionally been able to hold a Bachelors degree in any subject, a 'diploma' to qualify them to teach in secondary school, or a 'certificate' in primary teaching. However, first cycle primary teachers must now hold a diploma, second cycle primary teachers are expected to have an 'advanced' diploma or a degree, and in secondary schools teachers must have a degree (MoE, 2010).

The EPRDF government is focusing on quality and relevance both in an attempt to ensure that the education system fulfils its intended economic function, and to improve enrolment and retention rates by addressing a reported devaluing of education among parents in particular (MoE, 2010: 10). As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, the inferior quality of schooling is seen to be fostering the high-levels of absenteeism and dropout seen in Ethiopian schools (Pereznieto and Jones, 2006; Woodhead, 2009). Whether it is parents and caregivers or the children themselves who are making enrolment and attendance decisions, it is argued that low perceptions of schools' quality and relevance are leading to a devaluing of education that discourages continued participation (Roschanski, 2007; UNICEF, 2009; Woodhead, 2009). High levels of dropout threaten to invalidate the country's enrolment expansion, and the latest statistics indicate that in 2011 the survival rate to the last year of primary school was only 37 per cent (40 per cent among girls and 34 per cent among boys), with 28 per cent of students dropping out in their first year (United Nations Statistics Division, 2014). The government is thus seeking to improve the quality and relevance of primary provision in order to address this problem.

Following the human capital model of education discussed in Chapter Two, the EPRDF government largely understands 'quality' largely in terms of effectiveness; that is the extent to which schooling is producing desired economic outcomes and cognitive learning measures such as numeracy and literacy (MoE, 2010). The notion of 'relevance', meanwhile, has been used in two different senses in the government's policy and strategy documents. First,

the term is used to describe forms of education and curricula that are suitable and applicable to the everyday lives of children, particularly those from the social groups who have typically been 'hard to reach', including nomadic and pastoralist communities (see for example MoE, 2010: 9). Second, and more commonly, it is used to mean education that has relevance to the future working lives that the government wishes to prepare students for (MoE, 2010: 7). This has included in particular preparing young people to work in the fields of technology and construction. Government strategies to improve the 'quality and relevance' of education and thereby increase enrolment, retention and learning outcomes have included improving curricula, placing increasing importance on mathematics, science and technology, and recruiting and training new teachers (MoE, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2010). The 2010 ESDP is also concerned with fostering a 'motivational and child-friendly learning environment', indicating a focus on process as well as outcomes (MoE, 2010: 6).

The EPRDF government has also progressively turned its focus to areas of the education system other than primary provision. The more recent ESDPs have set aside funds to invest in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), higher education provision, and adult literacy programmes in attempts to meet the perceived demands of the modern world (MoE, 2005, 2010). The party is also placing increasing emphasis on early childhood care and education [ECCE] as the proper preparation needed to enable children to survive and succeed in primary schools (MoE, 2010). Formal education is thus being deemed

appropriate and necessary for an increasing proportion of young Ethiopians' lives.

4.4 Analysing these policies as generative mechanisms

In all, then, it is constitutionally and legally set up for children in Ethiopia to go to school. As argued in Chapter Two, the analysis in this thesis does not accept the contention that children go to school only because they are compelled to do so, either by their government or by adults in their household. However, it is not possible to explain children in Hawassa's school attendance, and the reasons that they gave for their going to school, without considering the strategies and structures that their government has employed in order to encourage their doing so. These institutional and legislative structures constitute real generative mechanisms that children's motivations for going to school presupposed. It would not be possible for children in Hawassa to go to school, for example, if there were no schools in the city for them to go to. Likewise, if there were no teachers to staff those schools, children would not be able to participate in education. Similarly, some children in Hawassa would not be able to go to school – and many more might not want to – if they were unable to combine their education with their other responsibilities, including paid labour or domestic chores.

As well as physically enabling children in Hawassa to go to school, the above structural, institutional and legal mechanisms have reconstituted Ethiopian society so that a 'normal' childhood is expected to involve attending school and working diligently to become a good and productive individual and citizen. This

is not to suggest that children are simply the site of social construction, and passively follow these normative scripts regarding the role of the 'good' child, but rather that these discursive generative mechanisms now combine to encourage Ethiopian children's participation in formal education in an unprecedented way. The following chapters will return to these institutional and legal structures to consider what they reveal about the functions and meanings that the EPRDF government has attributed to formal education, and to consider if and how these discursive forces were shaping the particular reasons that children in Hawassa gave for going to school.

4.5 The impact of global politics and governance

The institutional and legal mechanisms shaping children in Hawassa's school attendance were not only operating at a national level. Although it is reported that the EPRDF government is 'notoriously steadfast' in its negotiations with international agencies, and not known for backing down in the face of donor demands that the party does not agree with (Fraser and Whitfield, 2008: 9; ODI, 2011: 21), the EPRDF's commitments to education have nevertheless been strongly encouraged and at times coerced by the international community. Children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school, therefore, are not only shaped by their own government's ideologies and policies, but by a global system of governance and 'developmentality' (Ilcan and Phillips, 2010).

That system of governance, which entails the World Bank and IMF as well as the UN institutions, has shaped the actions of national governments through both direct and indirect mechanisms of power. For instance, in the early years of the

EPRDF regime, the government was subject to the strict conditionalities of Structural Adjustment. Later came the requirements for IMF and World Bank approved Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Since the turn of the century, there has also been increasing exercise of power by these institutions through ‘calculative technologies’ (Ansell, 2015; Ilcan and Phillips, 2010). Through the setting of targets such as the MDGs and EFA goals, which were drawn up ‘with minimal involvement from Southern governments’, multinational institutions determine the development agenda and propel governments towards certain outcomes (Ansell, 2015: 9; see also James, 2006; Jansen, 2005; King and Rose, 2005). The focus on monitoring progress towards such goals encourages governments to focus on measurable outcomes such as net enrolment and intake ratios, and thus to expand the reach of education as far as possible. If they fail to do, significant amounts of financial support can be withdrawn. International measurements of educational outcomes such as the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA] also seek to standardise and manage the quality of national governments (Ansell, 2015, Foucault, 2007) as well as populations (Ilcan and Phillips, 2010).

The World Bank, UN institutions, and other international actors have also shaped the development agenda by targeting aid to particular programmes that fit their desired model of development. The EPRDF government has benefited from a growing flow of foreign aid, particularly for education, as a consequence of a widespread perception of Ethiopian education as a ‘success story’ (Dom, 2009: xi; IRIN, 2010; Save the Children, 2012: 1). The EPRDF government has not

embraced the free trade mandate of the WTO, and has in practise implemented a form of state-led and state-managed industrialisation that has more in common with China's communists than the capitalist donors of the West (The Economist, 2015). Nevertheless, Western donors who believe that this regime subscribes to a more appropriate (i.e. more neoliberal and – supposedly – liberal-democratic) model of development than its predecessors are keen to reward the EPRDF for the dramatic expansion of education discussed above. In 2012, 6 per cent of all development aid and over 10 per cent of ODA commitments for education to Africa were received by the Ethiopian government, making Ethiopia the largest recipient on both counts (OECD, 2014). The Overseas Development Institute report that this support is likely to continue in coming years, as the ESDPs gain more respect and recognition among the international community. Ensuring that financial aid continues to flow into the country's economy provides a strong incentive for the EPRDF government to want more Ethiopian children to go to school (ODI, 2011: 22).

The EPRDF government has embraced a number of priorities promoted by these international institutions. The first of these priorities is the equation of 'development' with economic growth and, more specifically, growth through integration into global markets. The World Trade Organisation, World Bank and International Monetary Fund, who largely control the parameters of public debate about economic development, and who enforce the conditionalities mentioned above, maintain that economic development depends on free, international trade (Sapsford, 2008: 79). The UN also maintains that

globalisation can be 'a positive force for all the world's people', and the final MDG presents a desired 'global partnership for development' as synonymous with an open, multilateral trade system (UN, 2000). The defeat of the Derg in the early 1990s did not happen in isolation, but was in line with the fall of communism across many parts of the world. As will be discussed further in Chapters Five and Seven in particular, the EPRDF government's conceptualisation of development in terms of the furthering of Ethiopia's competitiveness in the global market – despite its rejection of free enterprise in the domestic market – is symptomatic of an increasingly capitalist, neo-liberal and globally integrated world.

Linked to this economic conceptualisation of development, the EPRDF government's priorities for education have been in line with those of the global development elites. In the 1980s, the decade before the EPRDF came to power, control of the global agenda for education shifted from UNESCO to the World Bank (Ansell, 2015; Gould, 1993). The World Bank is now the largest funder of education worldwide, and – in contrast to UNESCO's attention to equity of access – largely concentrates on the benefits of education as an investment in human capital. The World Bank's main concerns have thus been strengthening the link between education and the demands of national and global markets, and reducing the costs to the state of education (Ansell, 2015). It cannot be claimed that the EPRDF's adoption of a human capital approach to education is purely a result of coercion at the hands of the World Bank and IMF and not of national autonomy. But what is clear is that through funding conditionalities

including curricula reform, privatisation and deregulation, the World Bank and other actors have strongly encouraged a certain form of education, and have sought to standardise education across the World (Ansell, 2015).

As well as these favoured functions of education, the EPRDF's rapid expansion of primary provision in particular is a reflection of global development priorities. As discussed in Chapter Two, international commitments to Universal Primary Education have been being made since the post-War period, and since the 1990s in particular the provision of free primary education has been a key element of the Post-Washington Consensus (Ansell, 2015). This has been encouraged through the targets, aid and conditionalities discussed above. Furthermore, agencies such as UNICEF implement the expansion of education themselves, through the building and funding of 'alternative' schools and education centres. As well as a desire to produce generations of workers fit for the global economy, the preoccupation with UPE rests upon the idea that a certain form of scholarised childhood is the ideal childhood. As discussed in Chapter Two, the notion of education being a 'normal' part of childhood has been exported throughout the world as part of the 'modernising' development agenda (Boyden, 1997; Prout, 2005). The impact of such norms upon children in Hawassa's school attendance will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

The pedagogical priorities adopted by the Ethiopian government also reflect international trends in education policy. The party's promotion of 'child-centred' teaching methods reflects the UNICEF (2009) model of good schools as 'child-friendly' schools that are child-seeking and child-centred, and that help

children to realise their right 'to an education which develops their personality, talents and abilities to the full' (UNICEF, no date) as well as preparing them for life in the contemporary world, enhancing their health and well-being and being a safe place for learning. As Tikly and Barrett have noted, this language of 'child-friendly' education and children's rights is becoming customary across Africa, with 'child-centered' ideals widely promoted although not necessarily realised (Tikly and Barrett, 2011: 5). Similarly, an increased focus on pre-primary education and the importance of children's early years is not unique to Ethiopia, but is occurring across sub-Saharan Africa as well as in the global North (see Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; UNICEF, 2007). While UNICEF and many NGOs promote child-centred learning as democratic and rights based, these approaches are also expected to enhance attendance and achievement (Ansell, 2015). As Vavrus (2009) has noted, active, individual-centred learning prepares children to be neoliberal subjects and independent workers in the capitalist system. The EPRDF government's focus on technical and vocational training, further education and adult literacy also reflects international shifts in attitudes towards education policy. Across the global South, international institutions are increasingly moving their focus and efforts beyond basic education, in a further effort to equip populations for participation in the global 'knowledge economy' (Tikly and Barrett, 2011: 4).

The international nature of these education priorities indicates that the institutional, legislative and discursive structures that underpinned children in Hawassa's school attendance, and reasons for going to school, were shaped by

the nature of global as well as local economics and politics. The analysis in this thesis will demonstrate that these structures of power operated in an open system (Bhaskar, 2008; Tao, 2013) and did not directly determine children's school attendance, but functioned as generative mechanisms encouraging children in Hawassa to go to school.

4.6 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has reviewed the many and varied mechanisms that the EPRDF government has employed since coming to power in 1994, all with the aim of getting more children into school. It has demonstrated that, in all, it is constitutionally and legally set up for children in Hawassa to go to school, and that this is now the statistically 'normal' thing for children in Ethiopia to do. As asserted in Chapter Two, the contention that children go to school only because they are compelled to do so is flawed. It does not recognise that children are active negotiators and decision-makers in relation to their school attendance. However, it is not possible to explain children in Hawassa's school attendance, and their motivations for going to go to school, without considering the steps that their government has taken in order to facilitate and encourage their doing so. The influence of these structures demonstrates the power of a critical realist understanding of human agency. The institutional and legislative structures that the EPRDF government has implemented can be understood as external generative mechanisms that operated in Bhaskar's third plane of 'broader social relations and structures'. Such policies have made it both physically possible and ideologically (as well as statistically) 'normal' for

children in Hawassa to go to school. They shape and are shaped by local and global ideas about what constitutes a good child and a good childhood, and, along with other mechanisms, generated children's understandings of the value and purpose of their education.

Analysis of these mechanisms has demonstrated that such institutional changes are not only rooted in the national Ethiopian government's priorities, but also in global structures of power and governance. The EPRDF government's commitments to the expansion of education have been strongly urged and even coerced by the international community through the power of loan conditionalities and international targets as well as through targeted aid.

Moreover, the party's actions toward providing universal primary education have been encouraged by foreign donors' appreciation of the government's policy choices. The actions of the EPRDF government with regards to expanding and reforming education in Ethiopia reflect the priorities of global development elites, including a conceptualisation of education as an investment in human capital in preparation for the global market, and of school as the appropriate arena for childhood.

The analysis in following chapters will return to the institutional and legal structures discussed in this chapter to consider in more detail what they reveal about the functions and meanings that the EPRDF government has attributed to formal education. It will also consider if and how these discursive forces shaped the particular reasons that children in Hawassa gave for going to school. The analysis of children's narratives about their education is separated into three

chapters, each of which focuses on a key motive for going to school that was expressed by participants in Hawassa. First, the analysis in Chapter Five examines children's narratives about going to school in order 'to get a job'. Second, the analysis in Chapter Six considers what they said about going to school in order 'to become a good person'. Finally, the analysis in Chapter Seven examines children's assertion that they went to school 'to help Ethiopia'. As intimated earlier in this thesis, these three dimensions are each allocated a separate chapter for analytical purposes, but were in fact highly intertwined and connected.

Chapter Five: Going to school to get a job

5.1 Introduction

The research discussed in this thesis investigated the following research question:

In the urban African context of Hawassa, Ethiopia, what motivates children to go to school, and to what extent do children's explanations of their schooling correspond with dominant arguments for universal primary education?

That overarching question gave rise to the following sub-questions, which were set out in Chapter One of this thesis:

- Q1 *What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school, and what do they expect to gain from their education?*
- Q2 *To what extent are these reasons for going to school consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses about the purposes and value of education?*
- Q3 *What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?*
- Q4 *To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?*

To provide context for the answering of these questions, Chapter Four reviewed the policies that the EPRDF government has put into place in order to encourage Ethiopian children's school attendance. Analysis of such policies demonstrated that these institutional and legal structures encouraged children

in Hawassa's school attendance in an unprecedented way. They made it not only physically possible but also ideologically attractive for children in Ethiopia to go to school. These structures therefore constituted external generative mechanisms (Bhaskar, 2008) that enabled children in Hawassa's school attendance.

The analysis in the remainder of this thesis examines the specific reasons that children in Hawassa gave for going to school. The resounding impression gained from my interaction with children and young people in Hawassa – within and beyond the realm of formal research activities – was that most were highly committed to education. These children perceived formal education to be of great relevance to their lives, and wanted to go to school. The children that I interacted with in Hawassa generally understood education as a defining indicator of a good life. During individual interviews, all of the interviewees who were asked said that yes, going to school made their life better. Although some indicated that their education was benefitting them in the present, the vast majority referred to the ways in which they believed that their schooling would improve their future, adult lives. In this way, children spoke about their education in terms of preparation for social adulthood. As will be demonstrated in the data discussed in the following three chapters, children were dreaming powerful futures for themselves, and were pinning these hopes on their formal education. Children mostly seemed to understand themselves largely as 'becomings' rather than beings, and in this way articulated a 'blank slate' conceptualisation of children as incomplete and partial beings who needed to

be socialised and made complete by their schooling. Their narratives thus echoed the twentieth century 'Western' model of children and childhood that, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, has been challenged by both sociologists of childhood (James *et al.*, 1998; Prout and James, 1997) and sociologists of education (Freire, 1972; Thompson, 2000). For the children who participated in this research, becoming a person of worth in Hawassa involved becoming a productive worker, a moral and capable individual, and a productive member of the national community, and going to school was the way in which to achieve these signifiers of adulthood.

The analysis in the remainder of this thesis is structured around these three key, and often overlapping, motivations for participating in formal education. This chapter will consider the reasons that children gave for going to school that related to being able to get a job and become a 'good' worker. The following chapters will then analyse children's narratives about going to school to become 'good' people and to 'help' Ethiopia respectively. The analysis in those chapters will also consider the ways in which these three objectives overlapped and interacted.

In analysing children's claim that they went to school to get a (good) job, the discussion in this chapter examines the employment-related functions that participants wanted their education to fulfill, and the mechanisms through which they expected their formal education to equip them and other students to get jobs in the future (Q1). It then examines the reasons that primary school pupils gave for placing such importance upon their ability to become workers in

the future, and explores the ‘ultimate concerns’ that were motivating children to participate in education for this reason (Q3). Following this, the analysis considers the extent to which these narratives overlap with or challenge currently accepted knowledge about why children should go to school, in this context and more generally (Q2). In particular, it considers how far children in Hawassa’s ideas about going to school to get a job were in line with, or went beyond the economic human capital approach to education.

The focus of the chapter then moves on to the external constraints and enablements shaping children in Hawassa’s employment-related motivations for going to school. This analysis considers the ways in which generative mechanisms including those in the material realities of children’s lives and in their interpersonal relationships with others, along with broader political, economic and discursive forces, were interacting with children’s ultimate concerns in order to lead them to place such value on being able to earn a living and to access certain jobs, and to identify formal education rather than any other course of action as the key to gaining such desirable employment (Q3). Finally, the analysis seeks to evaluate whether children’s narratives about going to school to get (good) jobs indicated that formal primary education in Hawassa might be enabling them to live lives that they have reason to value (Q4).

5.2 Going to School to Get a Job

The young participants in this research primarily understood their education as preparation for their future roles as workers. When asked in a focus group session why they went to school, for example, grade two students from SOS

private school said that they went ‘to get a better job in the future’. Likewise, Mihiret, aged 13 and studying at Gebeye Dar government school, said that she believed children went to school ‘to get a job, and to live a better life in the future’, Abebe (11) said that going to his government school made his own life better because it would enable him to join university, where he would study hard and then ‘get a good job, like a doctor’, and Kidest (15) asserted that going to school was making her life better because she was able to learn and would get a ‘good’ job in the future. In focus group discussions, Kidest and her eighth grade contemporaries at Union Academy private school had previously identified the assumed fact that they would get a ‘good job’ in the future as something that they particularly liked about going to school.

As well as speaking about getting ‘good’ jobs in general, children specified particular, desirable employment outcomes that they anticipated to result from their education. Participants’ lists of the ‘good’ and respected jobs they deemed accessible to children who did go to school included most commonly being a doctor, with teachers, engineers, scientists and pilots also mentioned frequently. These jobs also represented the career aspirations that the majority of children mentioned when asked what job they themselves would like to do in the future.

Participants further emphasised the expected link between their education and their employment as adults by asserting a contrast between the future prospects of children who did and did not go to school. As described in Chapter Three, children who attended focus group sessions annotated images of and

discussed two hypothetical children, one of whom went to school, and one who did not. When asked what the imagined 'At School' child might do in the future, participants spoke about him or her getting a 'good job' and focused on the specific, desirable employment outcomes discussed above. In contrast, the 'Not at School' child was often presented as unable to gain any employment at all. When prompted, focus groups often struggled to think of any jobs that children who did not attend school might do in the future. The grade two students at SOS private school explicitly declared that 'if they don't learn, they can do nothing', although they later modified this to the child being unable to get a 'good' job. Eighth grade students at Union Academy also made the assertion that the uneducated child would not be able to get 'good' jobs. Instead, they suggested, this child might become a servant, a shoe-shiner, a 'traditional' farmer, a slave or a domestic assistant. On the other hand, participants also offered becoming a thief, a beggar, a murderer, an 'addict' or a terrorist as likely 'jobs' that uneducated children would end up doing. This suggested that some participants did not see any legitimate avenues of work available to children who did not go to school.

5.3 How did children expect schooling to enable them to get a job?

As well as asking which capabilities children wanted and expected to be expanded by their education, the research explored *how* children expected their schooling to lead to such outcomes. The following discussion reviews the ways in which young participants in Hawassa expected that going to school would lead to their gaining employment in the future.

5.3.1 Knowledge and skills

Firstly, participants trusted that the education system was imparting them with the knowledge that they would need in order to find a job. For instance, Ashnafe, who was 12 years old and in grade four at Union Academy, asserted that his private school was aiding his progress towards becoming a doctor ‘by providing good teachers [who] give us good knowledge’. Sultan, a year younger and in grade five at Adare government school, meanwhile, asserted that going to school made his life better because it gave him the knowledge he would need to work in the future. This was in contrast, Sultan declared, to children who did not go to school, who would be unhappy because ‘they can’t work without getting knowledge’. Similarly Mahilet, aged 15 and in grade seven at Gebeye Dar government school, said that ‘some people because of they don’t go to school, they have a problem by now [...] they don’t get knowledge so they can’t work’. Girls at CC1 declared that ‘by having knowledge we can be employed [by a] good company’, whilst the male group at CC2 asserted that ‘every job needs its own knowledge’, and explained that going to school would endow them with that specific knowledge.

Subject-specific knowledge was often identified as helping children to realise their career aspirations. For instance, participants talked about civics and social studies helping them to become lawyers, biology and chemistry leading to a career as a scientist, mathematics leading to jobs in accountancy, physics leading to engineering and languages (English and Amharic) leading to journalism. Young people pursuing less academic careers also identified subjects at school that would help them to achieve their future goals. For

instance Destaye (female, 14, Gebeye Dar government school) believed that going to school would help her to succeed in becoming a 'businessman' by giving her knowledge of calculation and helping her to learn how to save her money.

As well as the new knowledge that they acquired at school, boys at the second child conference talked about using the skills that they gained to get a job. In particular, they talked about the importance of 'having a fertile mind' in gaining employment, and thus were happy that at school they were learning to study very hard. Likewise, Bemnet (female, 15, Union Academy private school) said that her schooling taught her how 'to study things easily'; a skill that she felt would benefit her when she reached university, and would enable her to obtain the medical qualifications that she would need to achieve her ambition of becoming a gynaecologist. Other students talked about skills that they were gaining through extracurricular activities. Dagemawit (13) and Mirinda (14), who were both members of the 'mini-media' club at Union Academy, believed that the skills they gained in the club would help them to become journalists. Wagaye (12), meanwhile, wanted to be an artist, and told me that she was developing the skills that she would need for this career in the art club at Adare government school.

Tigist, aged 13 and in grade six at SOS school, talked about the communication skills she was gaining at school, and how these would help her to pursue a career in politics. Interestingly, many children emphasised spoken English as a particularly important skill that they were gaining at school, but only the female

group at CC2 identified that learning this ‘international language’ was necessary because it would enable them to get ‘jobs outside Ethiopia’. Robel, aged eight and in grade two at SOS, said that he would need to speak English if he became a pilot, and his classmate Blen (female, 6) reported that ‘the importance of learning English is [that] when we go to different countries, we can communicate with people’. In Chapter Eight an incident in which grade eight students debated whether a clever child should leave Ethiopia or rather had a duty to stay and contribute to the future of his country will be recounted. However, most of the children who spoke of the value of English skills focused on being able to speak to foreigners, for example when they came to visit them at school. Participants are likely to have had this in mind due to the fact that they were interacting with me in English at the time.

Eyob, the Principal of Union Academy, also talked about skills. He said that going to school taught his students to ‘manage themselves’, as well as endowing them with the technical skills needed for the jobs in the agricultural industry that were prioritised by the government. Girum, a ‘lead teacher’ from SOS school, likewise believed that the skills children gained at his private school would benefit them in any future job:

Because whether they become you know professional or not,
even in different working situations that do not require that
much of education, [...] it is better worked with a person who
is educated [...] educated people when they work in
agricultural activities they produce more, educated people

when they involved in activities like [...] construction [...] they
can you know build better.

Interestingly, when asked what they expected their students to gain from their education, the staff who worked at the two private schools placed more emphasis on skills, whilst the directors from the two government schools focused on subject knowledge. This distinction was reflected to some extent in students' comments as well, and might reflect the move in private schools away from the rote learning that is traditional in Ethiopia, towards a more practice and skills-based approach to education (Vavrus, 2009). As discussed in Chapter Four, the EPRDF government are placing increasing emphasis on a participatory, 'child-friendly learning environment' in their attempt to raise students' learning outcomes (MoE, 2010), and Eyob, principle of Union Academy, echoed this approach when he emphasised the importance of children being 'creative' and asserted that they must 'learn everything through practice'. Recent research in Ethiopia has found that teachers with lower qualification levels are less likely to engage in student-centred teaching, and that this interactive mode of education is also undermined by overcrowded classrooms, large class sizes and lack of resources (Frost and Little, 2014). It can therefore be difficult to implement this approach in government schools in particular. Educational disadvantage is thus said to be being reinforced in Ethiopia because children from relatively privileged backgrounds are able to attend well-resourced schools with small classes and qualified teachers, and children from poor households are not (Frost and Little, 2014: 107). This certainly seemed to be the case in these schools in

Hawassa, although this is not to say that rote learning did not remain the norm in the private as well as the government schools.

5.3.2 Official qualifications and further education

As well as appreciating the knowledge and skills that they believed they were gaining at school, some of the young participants in this research recognised the instrumental value to be gained from their schooling in terms of the official qualifications it could endow them with. Aspiring to skilled professions such as engineering, medicine and law meant that academic achievement and progression was a prerequisite for realising the life trajectories that many of these children valued. Accordingly, many placed much importance on tertiary education. They perceived a clear path from school to a 'good' job via university, and so were particularly concerned with getting the grades that would enable them to do this. This is illustrated by the following quotes from pupils at Gebeye Dar government school:

When I get a [...] good result, or score, I will join the university
and have a better job.

(Asna, female, 11)

If I don't miss a class, if I get a good result in my exams [...] I
will join university and then I will get a good job.

(Tewoderose, male, 12)

After I join university, I will study hard [...] then I will get a good job, like a doctor.

(Abebe, male, 11)

It is important to note that tertiary education was not aspired towards – or seen as a realistic possibility – by all children. Interestingly, Bezabih (male, 12), Dinknesh (female, 15) and Mihiret (female, 13), who were in Grade Seven at the same government school as Asna, Tewoderose and Abebe (above), spoke about children being able to get good jobs ‘when we finish school’, rather than referring to university. This might indicate a degree of aspiration management in terms of university attendance and employment prospects as children progressed through primary school, and became aware of constraints upon their academic prospects (Morrison Gutman and Akerman, 2008, Tafere, 2010). Government school students were also more likely to name a career aspiration that did not necessarily require university education, for example becoming a teacher or a nurse, which would require ‘college’ education rather than a university degree, and therefore required lower levels of attainment at secondary level. Moreover, three students at the poorest school named careers that would not necessarily require any education beyond secondary or even primary level. Destaye (14) and Mahilet (15), both female and in grade seven at Gebeye Dar government school said that they wanted to become ‘business(wo)men’, pursuing entrepreneurship rather than office work in particular. Bereket, aged ten and in grade three, meanwhile, predicted that he might ‘work [on] the cobblestones’, meaning that he would be a manual

labourer helping with the road-building projects springing up across Ethiopia as part of the government's focus on developing the country's infrastructure. On the other hand, Bereket did specify that this would happen 'after I finish college', and also said that he might become a teacher or work in a government office. Many workers on the cobblestones will indeed have been educated to a relatively high level, and such construction work would involve some more senior managerial positions. Moreover, many other government students aspired to professions that did require prolonged participation in education. Around a third of all participants reported wanting to be a doctor, and this aspiration was even more popular among government school students than among children who were attending the private schools. Other government school students reported wanting to be engineers, researchers or scientists. However, private school students appeared to aspire to a wider range of educated and respected professions. Many said that they wanted to become a scientist, and others spoke about becoming lawyers, engineers, politicians, astronauts and economists.

No private school student explicitly spoke about gaining employment after finishing their schooling, rather than university, but that is not to say by any means that all private school attendees spoke about entering tertiary education. Instead, most were vague about their future plans, naming desired career outcomes but not specifying what, if any, further education would be needed to achieve these dreams. It is worthy of note that it was children at the poorest school who spoke most explicitly about their anticipated routes to

employment. This may reflect the fact that poorer children were most urgently concerned with the economic benefits of their education, not having other financial resources such as a family business or inherited wealth to fall back on, and perhaps having the most to 'lose' in terms of their lost potential for earning money whilst in the classroom.

It is also important to emphasise that although there were some gender differentials in career aspirations among the young participants in this research, girls and boys aspired equally to educated, eminent professions. For example, boys were slightly more likely to report that they wanted to become a doctor, and significantly more likely to aspire to being a scientist, but it was only girls that said that they wanted to become engineers or politicians. Moreover, neither girls nor boys discussed jobs in relation to marriage or their future family situations. This stands in contrast to research that has found older girls in Ethiopia to be adapting their employment and educational preferences in line with the alternative 'transition' of being abducted for marriage (Tafere, 2010: 16). These gendered dimensions of children's experiences and the impact of education in Hawassa will be explored further in Chapter Six.

5.3.3 Teachers' advice, guidance and discipline

As well as bestowing upon them knowledge and skills that would enable them to pass important examinations and facilitate their employment aspirations, participants also asserted that their teachers gave them valuable advice and encouragement that would assist their progress towards these goals. Many children identified individual teachers or a general ethos at their school that

encouraged them to aspire to certain professions, and aided them in their advancement towards these goals:

Q: So how does going to school to prepare you to be a scientist?

A: [teachers] facilitates me to study hard. Then they can support me. By giving different materials [...] And they can give a great advice

(Abel; male, age 11, Union Academy private school)

Q: And how will going to school prepare you to be a scientist?

Y: Through education. Through education and advice

(Yonatan; male, age 10, Union Academy private school)

Although the guidance that children mentioned did at times refer specifically to career advice, many of the comments about teachers' 'advice' alluded to guidance about being well behaved and studying hard:

He give me advice – good advice. He said 'study hard so you will be [...] a good person in future, and you will achieve your dreams'. He always give advice like that.

(Asna; female, 11, Gebeye Dar government school)

Always my teachers advise us to study very hard, to achieve our dreams [...] we would be what we dreamed to be, if we study hard. He always advise us this way.

(Senayit; female, 9, Gebeye Dar government school)

My teachers tell me how to behave and how to have a positive attitude, and it will [...] help [me] to be a doctor.

(Dagmawit; female, 10, Adare government school)

Whilst girls tended to talk about teachers' advice and guidance, boys were more likely to stress the importance of discipline at school. For example, Abinet, aged 10, who wished to become a doctor, asserted that it was through punishment and discipline that his teachers 'shaped' his personality and prepared him for his future career. Likewise, during the second child conference, boys said that discipline at school would enable them to get a job in the future. This gender differential will be explored in Chapter Six, which analyses in detail the ways in which children expected formal schooling to shape students' behaviour and values. The implication of this discipline in nation-building strategies is also explored in Chapter Seven. It is important to note at this point, however, that children in Hawassa – and boys in particular – were linking discipline at school to their future lives as workers.

5.4 Why did children value these employment outcomes?

As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, the beings and doings that people value, and their ideas of the good, can be understood as 'real' causal

mechanisms (Alderson, 2013; Tao, 2013). Children are moral social beings, who act in part on the basis of instrumental rationality but who are also capable of formulating and then committing themselves to 'ultimate concerns', and as a result choose certain paths of action (Archer, 2000; Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013). Theirs can be, and is, a substantive rationality, not just an instrumental one and it is this that animates them in pursuit of specific courses of action in relation to school. This research was thus concerned with why children in Hawassa would want to go to school, or to get a job, and with the moral and social reasons that were compelling them to pursue these objectives. As well as *how* they expected their education to prepare them for their lives as future workers, therefore, children were asked *why* they felt that this was an important function for their schooling to fulfill. Again, many had clear ideas about why this motivation was significant to them. The following discussion begins with the more orthodox, instrumental reasons that the young participants in this research gave for wanting to get a job, before moving on to the more 'moral' concerns that lay behind this motivation for going to school.

5.4.1 Getting a job to escape or avoid poverty

The children who took part in research activities in part wanted to become good workers so that they could escape household poverty. In focus group discussions, both grade two and grade six students at SOS private school said that a child who did not go to school would be poor in the future. The grade six group also conversely predicted that a child who did go to school would become rich. Tigist, who was 13 years old and in this older group, was the only child to explicitly address the issue of money in her individual interview. She asserted

that school was making her life 'better' because 'when I grow up, I don't need to be poor'. Tigist was orphaned and lived in the SOS children's village attached to the school, and might have had more direct experience of household poverty than her fellow private school students. Many other participants alluded to financial gains resulting from their education, however, albeit not reporting in their individual interviews that wanting to get more money was an explicit motivation leading them to go to school. For example, Tigist's classmate Etsub (11) said that as a result of her schooling 'I will have a better job and I will have a better life', whilst Tewoderose (aged 12 and in grade three at Gebeye Dar government school) said that 'if his parents are poor', a child would go to school in order 'to support them, after he get a better job'. At the first child conference, three participants added to the report about 'going to school to get a job' that children went to school 'to avoid poverty', including Kidist (15), who also specified that they went to avoid hunger. The notion of going to school to get a job that would allow them to meet their subsistence needs was a common one. Other girls at the first child conference talked about education being capable of 'eradicating' poverty, and said that it was important that they would have jobs in the future so that they could get 'good' salaries in order to 'save our money' and 'fulfill basic needs', whilst boys at the second said that getting a job would enable them to avoid poverty and afford the food that they needed.

5.4.2 Getting a job as a route to social mobility

Alongside their desire to avoid, eradicate or escape absolute poverty, many participants also hoped that their education – and associated employment – would lead to upward social mobility. Both the female and mixed gender groups

at CC1 said that they wanted to get a job because it would 'change' their lives, whilst both groups at CC2 said that getting a good job would enable them to change their 'lifestyle' by endowing them with more money. Both boys and girls at this conference said that earning money would make them happy, and the group of girls also commented that they would 'relax' once they had earned money. Likewise, grade six students at SOS school said in a focus group discussion that a child who went to school would be 'happy and rich', whilst an uneducated child would be 'poor and sad'.

Interestingly, girls at both child conferences focused more on the luxuries that they expected having a job to bring them, whilst boys tended to discuss the meeting of basic needs. At CC1, for instance, girls said that they wanted to get jobs as a result of their education because this would mean they and their families could 'enjoy' themselves, and that they could buy 'accessories' and 'beautiful' houses. In a similar fashion, the group of girls at CC2 said that they wanted to gain employment because it would make them rich and mean that they could 'have everything we want'. These differences between boys and girls might reflect traditional gender roles, in a context where men have customarily been – and remain for the most part – the main breadwinners, whilst women remain in the domestic sphere with a strong focus on consumption. Boys might have been more predisposed to thinking about the need to provide for their future families. Alternatively, girls may have identified more with me as a female researcher, and so have had more prominently in their mind during research sessions the perceived Western, luxurious background that they

believed I had left behind in the UK, leading them to cite these ideas of accessories, beautiful houses and riches. On the other hand, perhaps girls were more signed up to the dream of prosperity, freedom and affluence that are promised to result from education than the boys were, because girls' education is a newer phenomenon, and so there is less evidence of women who are educated but have not succeeded in gaining the promised outcomes of education. Finally, and more convincingly to my mind, girls in Hawassa might have been more receptive to dreams of 'modernity' and riches as a result of the fact that women's lives in Ethiopia have traditionally been far more disadvantaged than those enjoyed by men. Tadele and Gella's (2012) research with young people in Ethiopia also found girls to be even more committed to education, and invested in the promises of employment, modernity and urban ways of life than boys, with the female participants in their study reporting that they went to school because they wanted to escape traditional ways of life and divisions of labour which they viewed as backward and affording women little respect and autonomy (Tadele and Gella, 2012: 12-14).

5.4.3 Getting a job to help other people

As well as acquiring material gains for themselves, many young people talked about using their future earnings to help those around them. In their individual interviews, several participants expressed their belief that going to school would enable them to 'help' their families and households, and it became clear in the child conferences that the primary way in which they thought they would be able to do this was financially. The female and male groups at CC1 and the male group at CC2 reported that getting a job in the future – as a result of their

schooling – was important because it would enable them to ‘support’ their families. Girls at the second child conference also talked about using their money to help their families, particularly when their parents reached ‘old age’. Children’s ultimate concerns, then, went beyond neoliberal, individualist ideas of the good that centre around self-advancement, self-actualisation and individual profit. Instead, they encompassed an ethic of care and a collectivist notion of well-being, which motivated children to go to school not only to help themselves, but to contribute to the lives of others (Ibrahim, 2006). This collective orientation went further in that, as well as wanting to get a job in order to help their families, and local communities, many of the young participants in this research wanted the financial benefits of their employment to help Ethiopia. Children believed that their increased future earnings would directly address the national poverty problem. Grade five students at Adare school said that a child who went to school could ‘free Ethiopia from poverty and backwardness’, and this idea of going to school to ‘eradicate poverty’ was also mentioned in some individual interviews. Participants at both child conferences asserted that this ‘eradication’ of poverty would result from children getting jobs after completing their education. Boys at CC2 explained that ‘when we get money we help our country’, whilst the male group at CC1 reported that educated people would ‘develop economic progress’. Girls at CC1 talked about educated people’s employment helping Ethiopia to become ‘independent from other countries’. Participants from both government and private schools reasserted that the importance of getting jobs was in part that this would enable them to ‘help’, ‘develop’, ‘support’ and ‘change’ Ethiopia.

These collectivist motives for going to school will be pursued further in both Chapters Six and Seven.

5.5 What do these narratives add to debates about why children go to school?

Children's narratives about going to school in order to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to get a job echoed the human capital model of education that tends to dominate mainstream arguments for mass educational participation. Participants' conceptualisation of their schooling as preparation for productive employment clearly reflects this model of education, which evaluates the success of schooling in terms of its investment in the efficiency of human beings as potential production factors (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2007; Schultz, 1961; see Chapter Two of this thesis). Furthermore, children's expectation that they would use their improved employment prospects to advantage Ethiopia's economy resonates with the orthodox human capital stance that presents education as crucial in increasing the wealth of national economies by producing a population of skilled and productive workers (see Lay and Robilliard, 2009; World Bank, 1993). As will be discussed later in this chapter, these motivations for going to school reflected the priorities of the EPRDF government, which as discussed in Chapter Four have largely followed this human capital approach to education. Similarly, children's aspiration towards primarily 'intellectual capital' jobs, rather than manual work, were in line with the party's recent development strategies, which focus on the demands of the global 'knowledge economy' (MoE, 2010).

At the same time, though, the notion of 'going to school to get a job' is also

accounted for by the human capabilities model of education. As discussed in Chapter Two, the critique that the capabilities theorists pose to human capital theory is not that education should not endeavour to equip children to gain employment, but that the ability to earn should not be the only capability that it seeks to expand. The valued material functionings that children in Hawassa expected their education to make available to them through their improved employment prospects, including being able to afford food and shelter and to meet the 'basic needs' of themselves and their families, reflect both proposed 'universal' lists of capabilities and other research that has explored children's valued capabilities from their own perspective (Biggeri, 2007; Robeyns, 2006; Walker, 2006; Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006). Children's comments about going to school in order to afford luxury goods and to 'change their lives' for the better also support the argument that education can enhance capabilities and counteract adaptive preferences by raising children's aspirations beyond their experiences (Walker, 2006; Watts *et al.*, 2008). Capabilities theorists have asserted that schooling can provide a resource for poor people 'to contest and alter the conditions of their own welfare' (Walker, 2006: 172), or act as an 'inoculation' against ignorance of better ways of living (Watts *et al.*, 2008). Although it seemed that in this urban context children were exposed to alternative lifestyles more through globalised mass media than through their schooling, the faith in education apparent in children's narratives revealed that it was nevertheless through education that children believed these futures were achievable. Participants' accounts of their education also illustrate the importance of the recognition that human well-being is multidimensional, and

that people define a 'good' life differently (Biggeri, 2006: 65). The capabilities approach accounts for the fact that children might go to school for different reasons; an ambiguity that was highlighted when many of the young participants in this research asserted that they went to school simply in order to achieve a 'better life' for themselves, and subsequently cited differing indicators of this 'good life'.

As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, much work on human capabilities – including that of the approach's founder, Amartya Sen (see for example Sen, 2002b) – has been rooted in a neoliberal focus on the individual and that individual's interests and state of ill and well-being. However, the findings discussed in this chapter illustrate that many children in Hawassa had a more collective sense of the good, and saw themselves working towards the future of their families and local and national communities, as well as of themselves. The following chapters of this thesis will explore this ethic of collectivism in more detail, considering how it challenges orthodox accounts of children's school attendance and fits more closely with the theories of collective capabilities that were also discussed in Chapter Two (Evans, 2002; Ibrahim, 2006; Stewart, 2005). The analysis in these chapters will also explore the ways in which children's commitment to the collective good was simultaneously underpinned and contradicted by both the traditional social values embedded in Ethiopian life, and recent government strategies that have sought to encourage social cohesion, national identity and a neoliberal model of development.

5.6 Where do these motivations for going to school come from?

As established in earlier chapters of this thesis, as well as the motivations that children expressed for going to school, this research sought to analyse where these motivations originated, and the constraining and enabling factors that were leading children – and their families – in Hawassa to choose formal education above alternative activities.

Taken at face value, the motivations for going to school discussed above seem to indicate the ‘cost-benefit’ model of rational thought that has been assumed to form the basis of families’ and – to a lesser extent – children’s decision-making about school attendance. Perhaps children were weighing up the potential of formal education – as opposed to domestic or paid labour – to endow them with the skills needed to earn money, to provide for themselves and those around them and to support the development of their country. The findings from this research in an urban context do substantiate the suggestion that education is becoming increasingly valued by Ethiopian parents, children and communities as agriculture declines in productivity and importance, for example (Woodhead, 2009). Children wanted to be doctors, engineers or lawyers, and these career trajectories clearly require prolonged academic engagement. Thus, it makes sense that these children perceived going to school to be important and relevant to their lives.

On the other hand, the findings in this chapter have already demonstrated that children’s motivations for going to school went beyond the economic outcomes that they expected to arise from their education. Moreover, the fallibility of

children's knowledge that was highlighted in Chapters Two and Three reveals the importance of critical analysis beyond simply listening to children, given the fact that the social world is not simply how children – or adults – imagine it to be (Sayer, 2000). As discussed in Chapter Two, the orthodox model of rational, economic decision-making assumes that demand for education is limited by the perceived demand for skilled workers, as households are dissuaded from investing in the direct and indirect costs of education if they do not expect an economic return to this investment (Clemens, 2004: 2). However, the high levels of ambition and expectation held by the young participants in this research were not supported by the reality of the economic and employment situation in Ethiopia.

Agriculture remains the primary source of employment in Ethiopia, accounting for 80 per cent of the country's jobs in 2012, when the fieldwork for this research began (UNDP, 2012). Furthermore the Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency [CSA] reported an unemployment rate of 26 per cent among urban youth in the same year (CSA, 2012) and other evidence suggests that youth unemployment was as high as 50 per cent in some urban areas (Camfield, 2011b: 680). Moreover, according to the CSA, over 90 per cent of unemployed 15-24-year-olds in Ethiopia in 2012 had obtained at least basic education, and more than one in six had been educated beyond secondary level (CSA, 2012). These statistics reveal that education does not offer definite protection from unemployment for young people growing up and going to school in Ethiopia. Despite this evidence, all but two of the participants in this research who had

identified a specific career aspiration in their individual interviews expressed absolute confidence that their dream would be realised. The two children who were less sure about their success in achieving their aspiration identified themselves as the only potential barrier to their success:

Ya I'm gonna be doctor, if I work hard. But if not I guess I will take up engineering.

(Etsub; female, age 11, SOS private school)

A: I wanna be a economist

Q: Ok. Do you think this will happen? Will you achieve that?

A: If I keep studying in school then probably it will

(Asher; male, age 12, Union Academy private school)

Children's aspirations and expectations, then, could not have based upon a 'rational' assesement of the economic and employment outcomes that they could realistically expect to arise from their education. These findings confirm other research that has found that the lack of tertiary education and employment opportunities in Ethiopia has *not* reduced children's hopes or challenged the perceived link between education and well-being (Camfield, 2011b). In such a context, where the link between education and prosperity is far from evident, it is important to explore why children had so much faith that their education would lead to wealth and upward mobility. Hence, the following section of this chapter explores the material, discursive and structural factors

encouraging children to invest in education as the key to economic advancement for themselves, their communities and their country. Informed by a critical realist ontology, this challenges the orthodox model of educational decision-making that imagines children and their caregivers as rational, economic actors and assumes that decisions are made at a household level on the basis of the potential financial costs and gains associated with children attending school rather than engaging in economic or domestic labour. At the same time, it adds to much of the sociological research exploring children's life aspirations, which has tended to focus on the meanings and aspirations expressed by individual children rather than examining the structures that are generating or upholding these motivations (for some notable exceptions to this rule, see Boyden, 2013; Leavy and Smith, 2010).

5.6.1 Material realities

As indicated above, the young participants in this research placed much importance on being able to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families. This ultimate human concern was motivating children in Hawassa to go to school in order get jobs that would enable them to provide for themselves and others in the future. As well as this subjective agency, the material circumstances that characterised these children's lives also underpinned their motivation to go to school in order to get a job in the future. Many participants' experiences of absolute and relative poverty were leading them to wish for a better lifestyle, as was evident in the aforementioned discussions about meeting basic needs and avoiding hunger.

As well as being motivated to improve their future job prospects by their current living conditions, children might also have been motivated by a concern to not have to endure the hardships that their parents did. Research in Ethiopia and elsewhere has found that wanting to avoid the poverty and struggles that they have seen characterise their parents' lives provides a strong motivation for young people to invest in schooling (Kritzing, 2002; Leavy and Hossain, 2014; Tadele and Gella, 2012). Furthermore, the emphasis that children placed on avoiding hunger and meeting basic needs reflects their society's collective memory of abject poverty and hunger in recent history.

Although these concerns about meeting basic needs and avoiding the fate of their parents and/or fellow nationals indicate why children were committed to gaining employment, they do not explain why participants were so certain that participation in formal education was the way to achieve this goal. The following discussion therefore examines the generative mechanisms encouraging children in Hawassa to identify school attendance as the route to employment and prosperity.

5.6.2 Interpersonal relationships

Children's desire to escape the poverty experienced by their parents or compatriots was consistent with evidence regarding the ways in which class positions have been found to motivate working class teenagers in the West to attend university in order to 'transform' their futures and avoid the fate experienced by others (see Lehman, 2009). However, whilst poor children's commitment to education and investment in 'middle class' futures has often in

the West been seen as a betrayal of their working class routes and the cultural norms of their families and communities (Lehman, 2009; Sennett and Cobb, 1972), such concerns were not expressed the young participants in this research. As will be discussed further in Chapter Six, children of school age in Hawassa were often constructed as the lucky generation, who stand to gain from the benefits of mass education, national economic growth and relative peace in the region. Parents and caregivers in Hawassa seemed to, as a rule although not always, expect and encourage their children to go to school, to get a job and thus to be able to support them in the future. Sociological research has in general found that the aspirations that parents hold for their children tend to translate into children's own aspirations for themselves (Kritzing, 2002; Morrison Gutman and Akerman, 2008), and this 'parental norm of investment in children's education "to give them the chances I never had"' (Leavy and Hossain, 2014: 20) will have had a direct influence upon the formation of children's future aims.

In addition, the narratives reported in this chapter have shown that children in Hawassa were being told by their teachers that if they worked hard they would be rewarded with employment and thus receive everything that they dreamed about. It was clear that many young participants placed much value on their teachers' advice, and their authority on employment issues in particular, and these interpersonal relationships will have had a significant impact on the formation of children's aspirations, with teachers recommending and promoting certain professional careers. The comment from Eyob, the Principal

of Union Academy private school, about teaching children to ‘manage themselves’ reveals the importance of interpersonal relationships between teachers and students in defining and forming the new, ‘good’ child, who goes to school and works in hard in preparation for their future role as an employed worker (Nieuwenhuys, 1996). Moreover, it reveals the dominance of the ‘banking model’ of education discussed in Chapter Two, in that students are positioned as passive receptacles of deposited knowledge, entirely dependent upon their teachers for that knowledge (Freire, 1972). Chapter Six will explore in more detail the ways in which this deficit model of children and childhood, and associated notions of morality and respectability generated both children’s presence in schools, and their striving toward specific forms of (employed) adulthood.

As well as teachers and parents, foreign NGOs were also encouraging Ethiopian children to aspire to certain ‘respectable’, educated, professional futures (Camfield, 2011b: 687). When the young participants in this research suggested that a child who didn’t go to school would not be able to do ‘anything’, what they often meant was that the child would not be able to do any job that they recognised as being of merit or, perhaps, that they thought would be of interest to myself as a Western researcher. One can speculate here that children were very used to the smiles of encouragement that greet them when they tell foreigners that they want to be a doctor or an engineer when they grow up. All four of the schools involved in this research had contact and partnerships with

foreign organisations and volunteers, including the American Peace Corps and the international SOS Villages organisation among others.

5.6.3 Government priorities and official discourses about the purposes of education

As well as being influenced by their interpersonal relationships with influential adults, children's ideas and behaviours were shaped by the actions of their government. Not only were their lives structured by wide-ranging legislation and policy, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, but their choices and understandings were also impacted upon by the ideologies underpinning these interventions.

In order for the expansion of education to be successful, the EPRDF government has had to justify why children should be going to school. As illustrated in Chapter Four, the party has explained this largely in terms of the economic gains to be won by both individuals and the nation as a whole. The party's commitment to education has therefore rested primarily upon the notion of schooling as an investment in human capital, as evident in the 2005 ESDP, which asserted the 'main goals' of the education sector to be

[...] to see all school-age children get access to quality primary education by the year 2015 and realize the creation of trained and skilled *human power* at all levels who will be *driving forces in the promotion of democracy and development in the country*.

(MoE, 2005: 5, emphasis added)

The 2010 ESDP later asserted that the ‘present long-term vision’ for the country’s development was ‘to transform Ethiopia within 15 years to a middle-income country’, requiring a move to a per capita income of US\$1000 by 2025 from that of US\$220 in 2008 (MoE, 2010). The ESDP set out the that the official strategy for the realisation of this goal, which was to involve the provision ‘universal and quality’ education, the expansion of commercial agriculture, and investment in infrastructure and social services ‘as a way of jump-starting strong, private sector led growth’ (MoE, 2010: 9). As indicated in Chapter Four of this thesis, the EPRDF’s preferred version of industrialisation and commerce has been one that is overseen by a strong state (The Economist, 2015). Nevertheless, the Ethiopian education system has increasingly been geared towards a neoliberal notion of development that venerates market-led economic growth and integration into the global economy. Increasing emphasis is being placed on the demands of the ‘knowledge-based economy’ and on the importance of science and technology education in boosting economic potential in the industrial, agricultural and technological sectors (MoE, 2010: 11). These priorities dominate the public discourse about education in Ethiopia, and thus will not only have shaped children’s experiences whilst at school, but also generated their understandings of school as preparation for certain types of employment.

5.6.4 Broader political and economic structures

Children’s desire to go to school in order to get a job was also shaped by broader social structures in Ethiopian society that make it hard for young people in Hawassa to move out of poverty and into prosperity, or indeed into

any form of recognised social adulthood *without* going to school. Daniel Mains (2007) has described in depth the historical processes that have led to formal education being held in particular esteem in Ethiopian society, and to increasing levels of educational qualifications being necessary for social advancement in the country. He tells how, during the rule of Haile Selassie, education was limited to a relatively small population, and completing secondary school ‘virtually guaranteed’ one a job position of political and economic power such as a government administrator or a teacher. Meanwhile, the uneducated majority were destined to a life of low status manual or service labour. Education thus became the main means for social mobility in Ethiopia, replacing to some extent the traditional hierarchical relationship between land-owning nobility and peasant farmers (Mains, 2007). Under the communist Derg, private opportunities to accumulate wealth were virtually eradicated, and hence the value of government work increased further, with education remaining ‘the key to accessing status’ through this employment (Mains, 2007: 663). By the time that Mains came to conduct his ethnographic study of young, urban men in Jimma (a city in southwestern Ethiopia) between 2002 and 2003, he found that the EPRDF regime’s huge expansion of education meant that most young people had completed at least primary education. Increasing levels of education were therefore needed to access the government jobs that were still understood to be the primary source of prestigious and thus desirable employment (Mains, 2007). These circumstances in Ethiopia illustrate what Dore (1997) has called the ‘diploma disease’, where an expansion of mass education – particularly in the global South – means that although getting a

good quality job depends increasingly on having formal qualifications, educational certificates become less valuable as increasing proportions of the population are able to attain them. Paradoxically, this leads to further demand for an expansion of education, as students feel they need to gain higher levels of qualifications to get the 'educated' jobs that they desire, and to get some kind of qualification to do any job at all (Dore, 1997: 4). This demand is apparent in children's comments above, which identified formal qualifications and particularly tertiary education as prerequisites for entry into the 'knowledge economy' of the modern world. It is a key instance of how real, inherited social structures were determining the behaviours and choices of these young people growing up in Hawassa.

These historical changes in Ethiopian society are, of course, rooted in wider social structures. Going to school in order to be trained for work in the global capitalist economy would not constitute a motive for going to school if Ethiopia had not been incorporated into global markets, and subscribed to neoliberal economic policy. This is not to argue for economic determinism, or for theories of 'pure' rationality in human decision making, but to point out that children, as human beings, make decisions and commit to certain courses of action in the context of global structures that limit the options available to them.

5.6.5 Discourses of success and respectability

Although the young participants in this research appeared to be internalising official discourses about the power and importance of formal education as the route to 'good' employment', their accounts did not fully embrace government

priorities. They were not aspiring to be farmers, for instance, despite the government's promotion of 'agricultural-led' development and high-tech farming (ESDP, 2010). Instead, children in Hawassa were aspiring to certain occupations that were representative of modern, urban and 'professional' lifestyles. Grade eight students at Union Academy did acknowledge that an educated child might become a 'modern' farmer (in contrast to the uneducated child who could only become a 'traditional' farmer), but no participant wanted this future for themselves. These findings confirm other research in Ethiopia that has found children to prefer professional occupations that are associated with urban lifestyles rather than agricultural careers, which are perceived as hard, undignified and 'visionless' (Tadele and Gella, 2012). Participants in this research in Hawassa expressed a general view that rural communities were 'backward' and inferior. Atnafu (male, 10, SOS private school) spoke about how children in rural areas wouldn't go to school because people in those areas 'didn't know' about the 'uses' of education. Mulugeta, (male, 16, Union Academy private school), meanwhile, told of his own experiences of growing up in the countryside. He said that life in the city was better for him, because 'I can't receive education because in rural areas [there is] no education, and if you get education you will be [a] better person'. Mulugeta expressed pity towards his parents who were rural and – in his mind as a direct consequence of this fact – were both illiterate.

A preference for urban, formal sector employment has been found to be common among young people throughout the developing world, and not just in

Ethiopia. This preference poses a threat to governments, such as the EPRDF regime, who are trying to promote modern farming as an important and acceptable employment option (Leavy and Hossain, 2014; Tadele and Gella, 2012). Using Beck's (1993) ideas about reflexive modernity and the Risk Society, Kritzinger (2002) has explored teenage girls from farming families in South Africa's aspirations and choices in relation to education and employment. Beck's (1993) 'reflexive modernity' is characterised by constant risks which force people to make choices in all aspects of their life, including the choice of which 'reference group' they wish to identify with. Children who took part in this research in Hawassa, like the participants in Kritzinger's study, were choosing a reference group that represented modern, urban, prestigious lifestyles, leading them to aspire beyond their familial circumstances in terms of materiality and status (Kritzinger, 2002: 558). Leavy and Hossain (2014: 8) have discussed how children's distaste for agricultural lifestyles often results to some extent from their schooling itself, arguing that formal education 'is partly about learning and instilling respect for a life of the mind as distinct from manual work'. This chapter has demonstrated that children in Hawassa understood their schooling as preparation for respectable work in a knowledge-based, capitalist economy. Although Eyob, the principal of Union Academy, might have understood his private school to be preparing children from jobs in the agricultural industry (see above), children mostly reported their teachers encouraging them to inspire to service professions in the 'modern' information economy.

Children's desires for urban lifestyles were also rooted in structural changes in the labour market throughout the world, which have resulted in trends of urbanisation across the global South. More than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas (UN, 2014). Africa and Asia, the most rural continents, are urbanising most rapidly, and by 2050 56 per cent of the African population is expected to be urban (UN, 2014: 1). Although Ethiopia is in fact urbanising less rapidly than many other African countries (UN, 2014: 8), the majority of 'new' jobs are, and more importantly are perceived to be, in the country's cities. The children who took part in this research did live in an urban conglomeration. Like many other young people around the world, they were aspiring to a non-rural life that they understood to be progressive, prosperous and respectable (Kritzing, 2002; Leavy and Hossain, 2014).

As well as an assessment of the rewards to be gained from certain educational trajectories and employment options, then, children's occupational aspirations were informed by global ideas of prestige and status as well as economic and political realities. Interestingly, the young participants in this research did not voice the same level of attachment to government employment as the young men in Mains' (2007) study discussed above. Those young men, who were aged 18-30 in 2003-2005, and valued education in the formal, public sector above all else, represent the generation of the parents and/or grandparents of the children who took part in this research in Hawassa. This difference in research findings may therefore reflect a growing appreciation of the role of the private sector, which has expanded in Ethiopia in recent years as a result of structural

adjustment and privatisation policies discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis. On the other hand, the participants in this research were younger than those involved in Mains' study, and perhaps they were not yet so aware of the distinction between public and private sector work. Other recent research has found that young Ethiopians do continue to prefer government jobs to those in the private sector, as they offer the highest salaries and the highest levels of social status (Camfield, 2011b: 683).

Besides this distinction between private and government jobs, the findings of this study in Hawassa correspond with other research in Ethiopia that has found children to aspire to the most prestigious occupations that they are aware of (Tafere, 2010: 9). Not only were children in Hawassa planning to join the ranks of the professionals that they saw working in their city, but – as will be detailed in Chapter Six – they also dreamed of jobs they had seen and heard of through the media, including being footballers and athletes. Their desires for urban lifestyles in particular were rooted in global discourses linking urbanity and modernity, which are fostered by exaggerated media forms that present life in the 'modern' West as without fail affluent, glamorous and carefree. Modern media technologies mean that young people around the world, even in the remotest areas, are increasingly aware of alternative ways of living (De Boeck and Honwana, 2005; Leavy and Smith, 2010; Stephens, 1995). Television channels in Hawassa often showed films depicting (fictional) lives of affluence in America and Europe, and children often aspired to at least some aspects of these lives. Global as well as local mechanisms, then, were shaping the way that

children in Hawassa acted on their ultimate concerns and desires; constructing education, employment, and certain kinds of employment as prestigious and valuable.

5.7 Do these narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa was expanding children's valued capabilities?

The conceptual tools from critical realism introduced in Chapter Two highlight the fact that children can be mistaken, and that their understandings of the world are necessarily limited by the discourses available to them (Sayer, 2000; Spyrou, 2011). One aim of this research was to ascertain the extent to which children's narratives about their education suggested that schooling in Hawassa was expanding or inhibiting children's capabilities, agency and freedom. Leaving to one side the question of whether children's wish to get jobs in order to contribute to the development of the nation state of Ethiopia is something desirable – a theme that will be returned to in Chapter Seven – expanding children's employment related capabilities should be recognised as a worthy reason for their going to school, if that employment will contribute to the well-being, resources and opportunities that these children – and those in their households and families – are able to command for themselves. In Ethiopia's capitalist economy, with its few safety nets, everybody needs to earn a living.

However, as demonstrated above, the link between formal education and successful employment outcomes in Ethiopia is often a tenuous one. The young participants in this research were expecting education to make all of their 'dreams' come true, and were being encouraged by their parents, teachers and government to dream big dreams. Children's comments about their success

relying purely on their 'working hard' reflect their acceptance of neoliberal ideas of individual responsibility and market-based notions that proclaim that individual effort will be rewarded (Beck, 1993; Kamat, 2007). They were believers in the 'education gospel' (Grubb and Lazerson, 2006), which relies on the idea

that education offers students the promise of equality of opportunity irrespective of social background, gender, or ethnicity [and thus] that educational institutions are in some senses separate or removed from the rest of society.

(Lauder *et al.*, 2006: 2)

By articulating this neoliberal understanding of the role of education, young participants were overlooking both the demand side factors that will constrain the employment outcomes that are available to them and the personal, environmental and social conversion factors that constrain their ability to convert the resource of widely available primary education into valued employment functionings (Robeyns, 2005: 99). The neoliberal state is not committed to providing full employment, but simply to offering 'the opportunity to become employable' (Lauder *et al.*, 2006: 48). Consequently, the responsibility to be employable and to gain employment – and thus the blame for failing to do so - lies with the individual. Ethiopian culture has traditionally held hard work as a core value, and attributed progress to hard work rather than the quality of education or opportunities (Camfield, 2011b). These social norms, combined with the promises of high returns to education being made by

NGOs, schools and the government have paradoxically led both to Ethiopian children's high aspirations and expectations and to a reinforcement of such a neoliberal individualisation of 'failure' and blame (Camfield, 2011b). Structural adjustment and the associated IMF-imposed reduction of the public sector, meanwhile, have reduced the government employment opportunities available to young people (Mains, 2007: 664). The unrestrained and sometimes confused aspirations reported by many of the young participants in this research are likely to result in frustration and disappointment, at least for some.

The contrast between children's aspirations and labour market realities is not unique to Ethiopia. Many researchers have discussed how, at the same time that children in Africa began to expect and be encouraged to engage in sustained formal education and to anticipate certain occupational outcomes arising from their schooling, 'policies associated with neoliberal capitalism constrained the possibility of realizing these aspirations' (Mains, 2007: 664; see also De Boeck and Honwana, 2005; Ferguson, 2006; Jua, 2003). However, unlike in other contexts in sub-Saharan Africa and around the world (see for example Cole, 2004; Gough *et al.*, 2013), Ethiopian young people have not in the large responded to this lack of formal employment opportunities by creating their own entrepreneurial opportunities or by moving into informal forms of labour. Instead, the strength of Ethiopian values attributing shame and indignity to those participating in perceivedly menial forms of labour, or those kinds of work deemed inappropriate to one's degree of education, lead many young Ethiopian men in particular to remain at home and unemployed rather than engage in

forms of work such as portering, shoe-shining or waitering that would be understood as either dissent or – more likely - failure (Mains, 2007: 664). For these young people, it seems that education has not contributed to 'development' in the form of valued capabilities related to their ability to gain certain forms of respectable employment and earn a living.

As well as leading young people to internalise failure and blame, the education system in Hawassa seemed to be prioritising the governments' need for an acquiescent and productive workforce over the expansion of children's capacity for independent and critical thought. When the girls at the first child conference spoke of their schooling as practice for the working world, and when Eyob, the principle of Union Academy, spoke of the importance of his students being able to 'manage themselves' they presented this socialisation in a positive light. However, they were recognising the way that education can be used as tool of social control, as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis (Humphries, 1981; Johnson, 1970; Katz, 1976). Education is designed to prepare students for a life of work 'through a correspondence between the social relations of production and the social relations of education' (Gintis and Bowles, 1981: 46), and these schools in Hawassa were characterised by a highly disciplined hierarchy of authority and control that emphasised competition above co-operation and reinforced the motivation of performing for an external, delayed reward (Silcock and Wyness, 2000). This was preparing children to become productive workers in an emerging capitalist system, rather than to be intellectuals, creative artisans, or free thinkers, for example. On this basis schooling in

Hawassa was not contributing to ‘development’ in terms of the expansion of children’s critical capabilities, but rather in a narrow, economic sense. Education was preparing students to take up low ranking positions in a capitalist economy that is becoming increasingly unequal in its distribution (Amahazion, 2014). These ideas will be pursued further in the analysis in Chapters Six and Seven.

5.8 Conclusion

The first question (Q1) addressed by this research was

*What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school,
and what do they expect to gain from their education?*

The evidence reviewed in this chapter has demonstrated that the young participants who took part in this research in Hawassa largely understood their education as preparation for their future roles as workers. Children believed that going to school would enable them to get a ‘good’ – or indeed any – job in the future, by endowing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, qualifications and attitudes.

The second research question (Q2) addressed by the research asked

*To what extent are these reasons for going to school
consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses
about the purposes and value of education?*

Children in Hawassa’s accounts of going to school in order to get a job affirm widely accepted beliefs about why children – in urban Ethiopia, in the global

South, and around the world – do and should go to school. First, participants' presentation of formal education as an input into their future productivity as workers reflects the instrumentality of the dominant human capital model of education, which conceptualises education as an investment in human labour power. However, although children's narratives revealed an instrumental view of education, in that they saw schooling as a means to achieving something else, this was not limited to the narrow, economic instrumentalism of the human capital approach. Instead, being able to get a job was itself seen as a means to other valued ends. This chapter has demonstrated that children wanted to get jobs so that they could protect themselves and their families from poverty, realise social mobility and contribute to the Ethiopian community. In this way, participants' understandings of their education were more fully encapsulated by the human capabilities model of education, which identifies being able to get a job as just one of the valued capabilities that can be expanded by education, and as key in expanding other important freedoms (Robeyns, 2006; Walker, 2006).

These findings underline the important contribution that children themselves can make to discussions about why they should go to school, and the functions that education has the potential to fulfill in their societies. However, the fallibility of human knowledge highlighted in Chapter Two of this thesis means that children might be mistaken about what their education can and will achieve (Sayer, 2000). The third question (Q3) addressed by this research thus asked

What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?

Given the stark contrast between the high expectations held by the young participants in this research and the current employment context in Ethiopia, it is evident that children in Hawassa could not have been making decisions about their schooling purely on the basis on rational evaluations of proven outcomes of education, as modelled by economic orthodoxy. Instead, the evidence discussed in this chapter suggests that children's faith in the ability of education to improve their lives via enhanced employment prospects was shaped by the pervasiveness of a global discourse about the requirements of the 'knowledge-economy', as well as more context-specific cultural norms about the role of education in providing access to respected and honourable work. Children were subject to messages from their parents, their teachers, their community and their national government that asserted that education was the key to a prosperous and happy future, and this was motivating them to invest in their education in order to achieve their 'ultimate' aims of being able to provide and achieve better living conditions for themselves, their families and their nation.

The fallibility of children's knowledge also points towards the capabilities concept of 'adaptive preferences', in which people come to adapt their preferences in line with constraints upon their opportunities, and so do not desire freedom (Sen, 2002a; Watts *et al.*, 2008). This final question (Q4) addressed by this thesis therefore asked

To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?

Children in Hawassa's desire to go to school in order to be able to get a job, earn a living and thus provide for themselves and those around them is in itself a creditable one. However the evidence discussed in this chapter also suggests that, by subscribing to this neoliberal ideal of individual responsibility and progress, children were overlooking the external conversion factors and structural counter-tendencies that might constrain their ability to achieve these aims. At present, both the education system in Hawassa and the national and global economic situation mean that many children will not achieve the prosperous, urban futures that they imagine for themselves and their fellow Ethiopians (Camfield, 2011b; CSA, 2012). The consequences of these unfulfilled aspirations remain to be seen, but could include either widespread political unrest and upheaval, or an internalisation of failure and blame among another generation who are unable to live lives that they have reason to value.

Furthermore, schools in Hawassa were largely preparing students to take up low ranking positions in the capitalist economy, rather than to develop critical capabilities that might enable them to challenge the world around them, and thus were not fostering human development in the form of individual and collective freedoms.

The analysis in the next chapter will pursue this argument further, considering the ways in which children believed that going to school was essential in order

to become a good person, and what these narratives tell us about the kind of 'development' that their government was preparing them to contribute to. The findings discussed will demonstrate that children's ideas about education and morality were closely intertwined with their employment aspirations, with gainful unemployment understood as the route to social acceptance, recognition and respect.

Chapter Six: Going to school to become a good person

6.1 Introduction

To recap, the research discussed in this thesis investigated the following research question:

In the urban African context of Hawassa, Ethiopia, what motivates children to go to school, and to what extent do children's explanations of their schooling correspond with dominant arguments for universal primary education?

That overarching question gave rise to the following sub-questions:

- Q1 *What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school, and what do they expect to gain from their education?*
- Q2 *To what extent are these reasons for going to school consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses about the purposes and value of education?*
- Q3 *What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?*
- Q4 *To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?*

The analysis in Chapter Four reviewed the policies that the EPRDF government has put into place in order to encourage Ethiopian children's school attendance, and demonstrated that these institutional and legal mechanisms acted as 'generative mechanisms' that directly shaped children in Hawassa's school

attendance (Q3). However, the participants in this research were not simply attending school because their government wanted them to. Instead, they had clear ideas about what they wanted to gain from their education. The findings discussed in Chapter Five demonstrated that children wanted to go to school ‘to get a job’, and primarily understood their school attendance as preparation for their future roles as workers (Q1). They believed that going to school would enable them to get jobs in the future, and as a consequence would enable them to protect themselves from poverty, to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families, to afford a more prosperous lifestyle and to make a monetary contribution to the future of their nation. Analysis of children’s narratives about going to school to get a job demonstrated that although the notion of going to school in order to obtain the knowledge and skills required to gain productive employment reflects the human capital model of education, children in Hawassa also wanted to get jobs in order to expand other, valued capabilities that went beyond such orthodox, economic understandings (Q2). Children’s employment-related motivations for going to school were therefore more comprehensively accounted for by the human capabilities approach, which promotes education as the means to expanding various capabilities and freedoms that people have reason to value.

The analysis in Chapter Five also examined the generative mechanisms shaping these employment-related motivations for going to school (Q3). As well as stemming from children’s ‘ultimate concerns’ about being able to provide for themselves and others, and to avoid poverty and hunger, these reasons for

going to school were rooted in local and national discourses that encouraged children in Hawassa to understand formal education and employment as indicators of success. They were also constrained by economic and political structures that made it necessary for them to go to school in order to achieve certain valued capabilities, including being able to provide for themselves and others, and to gain financial independence from their parents.

Finally the analysis in Chapter Five considered the extent to which children's narratives about going to school to get a job indicated that school education in Hawassa might be enabling them to live lives that they have reason to value (Q4). The argument put forward was that although gaining employment might well be expanding children's valued capabilities, children's expectations regarding their future education and employment trajectories were unlikely to be fulfilled. Such unfulfilled aspirations are likely to lead to an internalisation of failure and blame. By preparing students to contribute to a narrow, economic type of national development, schools in Hawassa were not fostering holistic human development in the form of individual and collective freedoms.

In this chapter, the analysis turns to children's motivations for going to school that went beyond their desire to gain employment. Participants in Hawassa often asserted that they went to school in order to become good and moral people as well as good workers (Q1). The analysis in this chapter reviews *how* children believed that their formal schooling equipped them to become good people, and *why* they wanted it to do so. The interactions between children's

motivations to go to school to become good workers and good people are also considered.

Following this, the discussion turns to the ways in which these narratives about going to school to become 'good' and moral people confirm or challenge the currently accepted knowledge about why children in Ethiopia, in the global South, and indeed around the world should attend school (Q2). The analysis also considers where these motivations and expectations 'came from'. It explores the ways in which children in Hawassa's ultimate concerns interacted with the generative mechanisms shaping their lives, with the result of leading participants to believe that formal education was necessary in their quest to become a good person in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others (Q3).

Finally, children's motivations for going to school to become good people are evaluated (Q4). This evaluation asks whether schools in Hawassa were empowering children to become the people that they want to be, or rather constraining them within a certain moral framework that was not necessarily in their best interests. This involves a consideration of whether education in Hawassa appeared to be expanding the important, non-economic capabilities that participants believed it was, and deliberation about whether the school *should* be an arena for moral as well as academic or cognitive training.

6.2 Going to School to Become a Good Person

As well as shaping them into good workers, the young participants in this research wanted and expected their schooling to transform them into morally 'good' people. The importance that children attached to the moral aspects of

education was evident in all research activities, but particularly in child-to-child interviews. For instance, Rebecca (13, Union Academy private school) asked her classmate Dagemawit (13) whether she loved her school, her teachers and their other classmates. Dagemawit said 'yes', she loved them all. The following interchange illuminates the importance these girls placed on 'properness' and diligence, and the future implications of their attitudes towards school

R: [giggles] Ok. Are you good student?

D: Ya. I'm good student.

R: Why? What?

D: Because, I'm learn, ahh, properly. I do my homework and class work properly.

R: When you are not good student, is there a problem?

D: Yes, yes. Ahh there is... a lot of problems. Ahh umm I told you, I'm not assume like good man.

As illustrated in this exchange between Rebecca and Dagemawit, children talked about the importance of their morality largely, although not exclusively, in terms of the people that they would become in the future. However, there was also a striking contrast in the behaviour and attitudes that participants attributed to the imagined 'At School' and 'Not At School' children in the present. The child who went to school was described as clever and good at studying, but was also described as having good personal hygiene, caring about

his future life, being happy and having lots of friends. In contrast, the child who did not attend school was seen to be dirty and lazy, lacking in manners and respect, dependent or likely to become dependent on drugs and alcohol and – as discussed in Chapter Five – likely to become a thief or even a terrorist or murderer. To some extent these moral faults were given as explanations for children's absence from school. Participants sometimes presented non-attendance as a child's own decision. However, contrary to this argument – and more prevalent – was the idea that education itself was morally redemptive. Improving in behaviour and morality was often given as an explicit reason for children's school attendance, such as when students in grade three at Gebeye Dar government school declared that 'a boy or girl needs to learn lessons', and that they went to school to 'change' themselves. The boys at the second child conference likewise said that they went to school 'to change our behaviour positively', and asserted their belief that '[education] makes you a good person [and gives you] a good childhood base'. Similarly, grade eight students at Union Academy talked in focus group discussions about children going to school 'to be[come] the best man or girl'.

6.3 How did children expect their education to lead them to become good people?

Although non-attendance at school was sometimes presented as a direct result of children's 'badness', then, children largely focussed on causality in the other direction. That is to say, the young participants who took part in this research in Hawassa held a deficit view of children, which determined that children – including they themselves – needed to go to school in order to *become* 'good'

people, both in their childhood and in their future lives as adults. When children who attended the child conferences were asked to explain this assertion, and to elaborate on *how* going to school would make children 'good', their explanations were many and varied.

6.3.1 Being able to provide for oneself and others

Many of the ways in which participants believed that going to school was leading to their personal improvement were intertwined with the improved job prospects that they expected to arise from their education. Employment was seen to expand children's ability to be 'good people' in a number of ways. Firstly, participants attached notions of morality to the independence that they expected gaining employment to bring them. When making posters explaining why they thought that it was important that going to school enabled them to 'get a job', children wrote that they went to school 'to be self-sufficient and independent' (male group, CC2), 'to be self-reliant' (male and female groups, CC1), 'to avoid dependence' (male group, CC1), to 'be independent from our parents' (mixed gender group, CC1) and 'to be independent from our family' (female group, CC2). The use of phrases such as 'self-reliance' and 'self-sufficient' indicated that children's preoccupation with gaining independence was largely framed in terms of financial autonomy; not needing to rely on their parents to provide for them, but rather being able to meet their own 'basic needs'. This desire for self-reliance stemmed partly from the importance that children placed on gaining agency and autonomy. This can be seen in the following comments made at the second child conference, where many

participants expressed a strong desire to make their own decisions about their future careers:

I wish I decide instead of my parents [what I will] do in my life.

I don't want to go to school because I want to be a footballer
and I don't need knowledge, but my parents force me to go.

I want to be an athlete but my parents want me to be an
engineer.

My family decide I should go to school but I think I would be
more successful if I work.

(comments from various participants, CC2)

In a drama activity at the first conference, girls re-enacted a girl being forbidden from becoming an artist or a dancer by her mother. The mother told the daughter, 'no – you must become like a pilot, a teacher or a doctor', and the girl shook her head and looked sad, but could not argue with her mother. Many children in the audience laughed and murmured in agreement – this was a familiar family situation and children's frustration with having to submit to the desires of their parents was clear.

On the other hand, children's desire for 'independence' stemmed in part from not wanting to remain a burden to their families. Participants' conceptions of what it meant to be a good person included being able to 'know their burdens and benefits' and 'duties and rights', and being able to repay the care and

provision that their parents were affording them as well as achieving autonomy from their parental household. Tellingly, children often spoke about ‘avoiding dependence’ rather than being independent. At the second child conference, three participants particularly emphasised the importance of being able to help their parents:

Everybody has to have education, and if they don’t they won’t help their parents. They will be dependent and be beggars.

If [children] don’t learn they will never get anything but if they learn they will help their parents.

(comments added to the report about ‘Going to School to Become a Good Person’, CC2)

As discussed in Chapter Five, participants believed that going to school would enable them to offer material support to their parental households through their future employment. Children’s desire to ‘avoid dependence’ on their parents reflected social norms about familial obligation and changing generational financial responsibilities in Hawassa. Young people would be expected to care for and provide for their aging parents in the future. Children’s sense of obligation to their families was revealed through the idea of repaying the parents and families who were making sacrifices for their education. For example Mahilet, aged 15 and in grade seven at Gebeye Dar government school said that she wanted to get a job in order to support her parents who had been ‘sending her to school so far’.

6.3.2 Having important knowledge to share

As well as benefitting their parental households, participants believed that their education would enable them to provide for and assist their future families. Not only did they want to have the money required for a good family life, as we saw in Chapter Five, but they wanted to use their knowledge and skills to help their future families;

Through education you get knowledge [and] by this
knowledge, you can lead [your] family.

(Ashnafe; male, 12, Union Academy)

These educated persons [...] with their knowledge, they can
lead their family properly.

(Eyobel; male, 9, Union Academy)

Educated parents [...] can send their students – their child to
school [...] they can manage their family properly.

(Yonatan; male, 10, Union Academy)

As well as being able to help their families, children placed much moral importance on their ability to help 'poor people', orphans and street children. The male group at the first child conference expected gaining employment as a result of their education to mean that they could provide an 'example for other [people]'. During the second child conference, girls explained that their employment would enable them to provide foster care for orphans and street

children, as well as endowing them with earnings that they could use to provide such children with food and help them to 'afford their basic needs'. The girls also said that they would be able to help poor people to 'find work'. Similarly, Mirinda, aged 14 and in Grade Eight at Union Academy, said in her individual interview that she would provide orphaned children with school materials, uniforms and books so that they could go to school, and would also help them by 'mak[ing] them hygienic'.

Mirinda's idea that she would be able to 'make' disadvantaged children hygienic illustrates children's desire to share the knowledge that they gained at school to help those around them. Being able to share their knowledge was an important indicator of being a good person for many of the young participants in this research. For example Destaye, who was 14 and in the grade seven at Gebeye Dar government school, said that the 'best' or most educated people not only had knowledge, but used that knowledge to teach other people, and in particular 'to give new information for their parents'. This notion was echoed by a number of participants. The group of boys at the second child conference, for example, talked about going to school enabling them 'to help dependent people', not only by giving them money but by sharing knowledge and 'teach[ing] them to get a job'. Similarly Betelhem, aged 15 and in Grade Eight at Union Academy, said that children who go to school 'can teach what [they] know'.

It is interesting that it was most often the older girls at child conferences who spoke about sharing their knowledge with their communities, whilst boys talked

more frequently about ‘managing’ and ‘leading’ their families and setting an ‘example’ to others. This may reflect a gender differential between boys who were expected to have a more visible, public presence in society and girls who as adults would fulfill the roles of caregivers and domestic providers. However, importantly, the female participants in this research did not see the benefits of their education to be limited to the domestic or local sphere. The findings discussed in Chapter Seven will show that girls as well as boys talked about leading their nation and taking on political responsibilities, in direct contravention of traditional Ethiopian gender norms that exclude women from the public and political sphere. Kidist, a girl of 14 years old, also linked the idea of going to school to get a job to being ‘an example for other people’. Similarly, although traditional gender roles in Ethiopia might suggest that boys would focus on materially providing for their families and others, with girls anticipating a more caring role away from the public sphere, participants of both genders asserted repeatedly that getting ‘a good job’ was important because it meant that they would be able to help and provide for other people.

6.3.3 Learning about moral and social issues

The above ideas about being able to share valuable knowledge with those around them indicate children’s belief that education in itself would lead them to become good people through the explicit curriculum that taught them about important moral and social issues. Girls at both child conferences explained that in their civics classes they learnt about behaviour, ethics and respect, and at the first conference girls asserted that this ‘supported’ their becoming good people. Participants also talked about the importance of learning about personal

hygiene, the dangers of drug addiction and gender rights. The subject of gender rights was raised during the first child conference, after I mentioned that one focus group had suggested that a child who went to school would have a 'good marriage'. Mekdela, aged 15 and in Grade Eight at Union private school, spoke about education enabling women to become more equal partners within marriages. Although she perceived education as a potential source of disagreement between husband and wife, Mekdela believed that schooling was empowering women in Ethiopia to demand their rights in the home. She explained that in the past women had been 'suppressed', but that now they could learn about their rights at school, and so defend themselves against maltreatment. Although no child asserted that schooling would *guarantee* a good marriage, many talked about the ways in which it might facilitate this. As well as Mekdela's argument about women's rights, other participants, both male and female, spoke about being able to find suitable spouses at school; a notion that is not surprising given the notions of morality and respectability that children attributed to those individuals who had participated in formal education. Boys in grade four at Union Academy, meanwhile, linked an educated child's good marriage prospects to the fact that they would not use or become addicted to drugs and alcohol. However, participants differed in their feelings about this issue. Many of the older participants at the first child conference strongly disagreed with the idea that going to school would or should lead to a good marriage. Dagemawit, aged 13 and in grade eight at Union Academy, asserted that 'I didn't report that if we are [going] to school we can get good marriage. That idea is wrong.'. She said that marriage and school

were 'so different', and that there was 'no connection' between the two.

Similarly, Dagemawit's classmate Rebecca (female, 13) said that 'we don't learn at school how to select a husband or wife' and Alamudin (male, 14) declared that 'school is for knowledge not for marriage'.

6.3.4 Teachers' advice and discipline

As well as teaching the explicit curriculum, children expected teachers to take responsibility for their students' moral transformation within the school. For example, Dinknesh, who was 15 and in grade seven at Gebeye Dar, asserted her belief that 'even if we have some bad behaviours when we come to school, in the classroom the teacher teach us to behave'. Dinknesh's classmate Dagme, meanwhile, contrasted the morality of his free time in the 'village', or neighbourhood, where he lived, with the structure and 'shape' of his life at school;

In the village, with my villagers and with my friends, we spend our times in some bad places, like watching some bad movie [or] fighting the people. But when we come to school, we are reshape our behaviour [...] with the help of our teachers.

(Dagme, male, 14, Gebeye Dar government school)

Although there was widespread agreement about the moral authority of teachers, the children who took part in this research varied in how they expected or wanted their teachers to go about 'reshaping' their characters. Most talked about teachers influencing children's behaviour through advice and

guidance. Asna, aged 11 and in grade three at the same government school as Dinknesh and Dagme, described her understanding of a 'good' teacher as

The one who teach good in the classroom, the one who ask you when you were absent [...] from the class [...] 'why do you absent from the class?', and give you good advice.

Likewise, the mixed-gender group at CC1 said that they would behave nicely because they would 'listen carefully' when their teachers advised them, and that going to school helped them 'to accept any advice on our behaviour'. In contrast, some children emphasised the disciplinary role of teachers. Bezabih (male, 12, Gebeye Dar) said that school improved children's behaviour not only because teachers taught students, but also because they 'controlled' them; what they did and where they went. During focus groups many participants listed rules, regulations and discipline as things that they liked about their school, and grade five students at Adare government school said that in a perfect school not only were 'rules and regulations [...] respected', but that the principal would punish any students for misbehaviour. A gender difference was indicated in the contrast between the male group at CC2 (of which Bezabih was a participant), who emphasised the importance of teaching and discipline, and their female counterparts, who focused on teachers' advice. However, not all boys favoured discipline and punishment. Abinet (11, Gebeye Dar) said in his individual interview that he would prefer it if his teachers called his parents when he misbehaved, rather than punishing him themselves. This was despite his belief that being disciplined by his teachers and head teacher was shaping

his behaviour and benefitting his future aim of becoming a doctor (see Chapter Five). No participant explicitly mentioned corporal punishment as something they liked or disliked about going to school, and, as I wished to be guided by my participants' priorities, I did not prompt on this. The Ethiopian constitution outlaws the use of corporal punishment in schools, as did the rules of these schools in Hawassa. Although physical and psychological punishment remained widely accepted as appropriate means of managing children's behaviour in Hawassa, and other research reports that corporal punishment does persist in Ethiopian schools (see SCS-Ethiopia, 2011 for a summary of the evidence), I did not see any evidence of children being hit in schools in Hawassa. However, children did refer to methods of physical as well as psychological humiliation that were used as punishments in their schools.

6.3.5 Learning 'goodness' in interactions with teachers and peers

In addition to appreciating their teachers' moral guidance and discipline, children expected to learn 'goodness' simply by being around these respected adults. In addition to talking about being 'taught' to behave well, The female group at the second child conference spoke about the good 'example' that their teachers set them. At school, they suggested, they gained 'experience' of what good 'manners' looked like, from both their teachers and their fellow students. The male group at the same conference focused on the influence of their peers more than that of their teachers. They reported that going to school was helping them to become good people because 'in school we learn good behaviour from our friends'. Boys at the first child conference also highlighted the importance of 'good friends' for their moral development, and said that

they were 'protected from bad friends' when they were at school. The girls at this conference likewise reported that they learned good manners 'from good and clever students'.

The role of positive and negative peer pressure was particularly discussed in relation to the 'immoral' behaviours of drug use and addiction. Both the grade seven and grade five students at Gebeye Dar and Adare government schools respectively suggested that a child who did not go to school would end up being addicted to either drink or drugs. In talking about 'drugs', children were most likely talking about *khat*, a mild stimulant that is chewed by many adults as a social activity, not unlike having a beer with friends. Although widely understood as harmless, *khat* can be addictive, and excessive use is often associated with men living on the streets. The use of *khat* is widely discouraged in schools and in many households in Hawassa, particularly in Protestant households where absolutely no use of drink or drugs is allowed. The young participants in this research all spoke of drug use as deviant and dishonourable. When I reported at the first child conference that children had been telling me that 'going to school protects us from alcohol, drugs and addiction', however, this provoked substantial controversy. Some participants agreed emphatically with this statement, reporting that education protected children from drug addiction both by posing as a distraction from such deviant behaviour and by exposing them to teachers and friends who would teach them about the dangers of drugs. However, many participants recognised that there were 'addicted' children at their schools, and thus challenged the assertion that

schooling 'protected' them from such delinquency. Girls at this conference suggested that it was a child's autonomous decision whether or not to partake in drugs:

It's on our personal strength; it doesn't matter if we go to school.

(Kideest, 15, Union Academy private school)

If we [can] protect ourselves we can save ourselves from drugs. If we can't, we will be addicted. It depends on the personality.

(Dagemawit, 13, Union Academy private school)

One member of the female discussion group did suggest that 'there may be classmates or friends that force us to receive drugs', but the consensus in this group was that it was down to an individual's disposition or levels of resolve. Boys at this conference, in contrast, attributed much more significance to the impact of peer pressure. Kaleb, aged 15 and studying at Union Academy with Dagemawit and Kideest, said that whether a child would use drugs 'depend[ed] on friends', although he did also recognise the socioeconomic factors leading to drug use, suggesting that 'if we are from low economic family we will lose hope and resign schooling and start using drugs and so on'. Abel, aged 11 and in grade four at the same school, placed even more importance on the influence of friends and peers:

‘Whether we go to school or not, if our friends are addicted we still be addicted. We will never change [...] A friend (at school) who is addicted will tell us and make us believe and later we will be addicted.’

These contradictory comments, like the controversy that arose regarding the links between education and marriage, reveal the importance of recognising that children’s motivations for going to school – and understandings of how going to school might help them – were not heterogeneous.

Moving on from the notion of peer pressure, the girls at the first child conference discussed another way in which social interaction at school prepared them for their future lives. One suggestion on their poster explaining how going to school would help them to become ‘good people’ was that ‘by having social activities we can understand other people’s attitudes’. These girls also observed that ‘as we respect rules of the school we will respect rules of other places’, indicating that they understood school as an arena in which to practise for interaction in the social world.

6.4 Why did children want their education to lead them to become good people?

This research sought to explore the ‘ultimate’ human concerns that were leading children in Hawassa to want to go to school. Participants who attended the two child conferences in Hawassa were asked to explain *why* they thought that it was important that going to school would make children into good people, as well as *how* they expected it do so.

6.4.1 Ideas of the good, self-respect and self-confidence

The first reason that children gave for wanting their schooling to help them to become good people was that this morality was fundamentally important to them. As demonstrated in previous discussion, children were very concerned that they, their friends and their schoolmates were morally decent. Their understanding was that going to school, in the ways listed above, was helping them to become people that they could be proud of being. The group of girls at the first child conference said explicitly that they wanted their schooling to help them to be good so that they could be 'self-confident'. Likewise, one participant at the second child conference added to the report about 'Going to School to Become a Good Person' that 'if we [are able to] to help our mothers we will be happy'. Atnafu, aged 10 and in grade six at SOS private school also pronounced that 'going to school is not only to get a job but also to have vision'.

Participants' ideas of the good did not only relate to their morality in the here and now, but reflected their plans and dreams for a good future. These moral concerns are a clear illustration of the fact that people's ideas about what is good and right, and the beings and doings that they value, constitute real reasons for action (Alderson, 2013; Tao, 2013). Children were motivated to go to school because they cared about being good, moral people, and this can be considered an 'ultimate concern' (Archer, 2000) or valued end in itself.

6.4.2 Earning respect and affection from others

Far more frequently discussed than children's own ideas of the good and desire for self-respect, however, was the idea that being a good person as a result of

their education meant that other people would respect them. In her individual interview, Kidest (15) asserted that attending Union Academy made her life better 'because I am learn, I get good job, I get respect from the society, and I will [feel] proud'. The female group at the first child conference and the male group at the second likewise reported that they went to school in order 'to be respected'. The girls at the first child conference expanded on this idea on their poster about 'Going to School to Become a Good Person', explaining that going to school would mean that they had a 'good image', and that people would have a 'good attitude about [them]' because they saw them 'within the right side'. Likewise, the group of girls at the second conference said they went to school in order 'to create a good image on our self'.

Both boys and girls, then, wanted their education to ensure that they were afforded respect and acceptance in their society. Going further than this, many participants indicated that their desire for love and affection motivated them to go to school. Aregash (aged 11, Gebeye Dar government school), for example, reported in her individual interview that children went to school to make their parents proud of them, whilst girls at the second conference believed that, 'if we work hard we will be loved by others'. These girls also said that becoming good people through their education would mean that they would 'share love' and not quarrel. Similarly, girls at the first child conference not only thought that education would bring them respect, acceptance and social attention, but said that the moral aspect of their education was important because becoming good people would mean that they were 'loved' and that they would have

happy and peaceful lives. Interestingly, the male groups at child conferences did not talk about 'love' specifically, although the boys at the second child conference did say that they went to school to become good people so that they could 'make good friend[s]'. Boys at the first conference, meanwhile, wrote on their poster that being a good person meant that they would 'be left alone from the society'. This is likely to mean that they would not be disrespected or abused, rather than a negative sense of loneliness or exclusion, given the positive nature of the preceding discussion of education and morality. This group of boys also asserted that being a good person did mean that you would have a good marriage. It was not only girls who wanted to receive affection from others as a result of their going to school.

Participants' commitment to becoming *recognised* as good people stemmed from their neediness and vulnerability; they wanted to be loved, appreciated and valued. The recognition of human beings' formation of ultimate concerns such as this allows us to appreciate that both adults and children are social beings, who act out of neediness as well as competence. Sayer himself has highlighted people's need for affective attachments as a fundamental motive for action (Sayer, 2011: 113). Vulnerability and agency are not mutually exclusive, then, as suggested by the positioning of vulnerability as a lack of action brought about by structural constraints. Such a stance has been common in the field of childhood studies, for example by theorists who cite the 'coexistence of agency and vulnerability' and focus on the ways in which 'these attributes manifest themselves in *different* times and places, and under

particular social, political, economic, and moral circumstances and conditions’ (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007: 242, emphasis added). In fact, here, children’s vulnerability and neediness – including objective states of being and not merely subjective states of mind – constituted the basis for their actions (*cf.* Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013).

6.4.3 Bringing honour upon one’s family and country

As well as wanting to become good people so that they could be confident in themselves and gain respect and acceptance from others, children in Hawassa were concerned with bringing honour to their families. Both the male and female groups at the first child conference said not only that helping their family was an aspect of being a good person, but that their being good people would help their families in itself. Their comments reflected the culture of *yilunta*, which is central to Ethiopian life. *Yilunta* revolves around ideas of honour and shame, and renders individuals personally responsible for both their own morality and the upholding of the honour and respectability of their family (Heinonen, 2011; Mains, 2007). Although similar to the African philosophy of *ubuntu* in its emphasis of communalism and prioritisation of the good of the collective above that of the individual (Venta, 2004), *yilunta* is arguably a more repressive force than *ubuntu*. Particularly centred on traditional gender ideals, which constrain girls and women to the private, domestic sphere and encourage men to pursue certain professional careers (Heinonen, 2011: 152; Mains, 2007), and on hierarchical intergenerational relations (Mains, 2007; Poluha, 2004), *yilunta* encourages women to submit to men, and children to submit to their elders. *Yilunta* can therefore trap children, and particularly girls, in subordinate

and passive roles, for fear of not only bringing shame upon themselves but onto their family as well (Heinonen, 2011).

The children who took part in this research in Hawassa also extended such notions of collective honour to Ethiopia's national reputation, with participants at both conferences adding to the report about 'Going to School to Become a Good Person' that they went to school to make Ethiopia proud. Chapter Seven will explore in greater depth the ways in which children believed their education would bring honour to Ethiopia, but particularly pertinent here is the way that children understood their behaviour and morality to reflect on the national community. Girls at the first child conference asserted that 'if we have good behaviour we can change our country within good idea and we didn't do bad thing to our country'. The group of boys at this conference talked about educated people's good behaviour making the country 'proud', whilst at the second conference one participant linked the morality of educated people to making 'Ethiopia [...] known over all other countries'. The analysis in Chapter Seven will explore further the ways in which this ethic of collectivism and children's commitment to the honour of their country was motivating them to go to school.

6.5 What do these narratives add to debates about why children go to school?

The findings discussed in this chapter illustrate the limits of human capital understandings of education that do not account for the personal and collective, non-economic, relational and social capabilities that children in Hawassa wished and expected to see expanded by their schooling. Many of

these non-economic functions of education *are* accounted for in the people-centred, human capabilities approach that has shaped the post-Washington consensus model of development, however. Participants' aspirations towards autonomy, self-reliance and being able to plan their own futures, for example, echo other research that has explored children's valued capabilities as well as lists of the 'universal' capabilities that education should seek to expand (Walker, 2006). Furthermore, the idea of going to school 'not only to get a job but also to have vision' (see above) is accounted for in Nussbaum's capabilities approach, which asserts that education can enable individuals 'to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of [one's] life' (Nussbaum 2000: 97). Capabilities theorists have asserted that children should go to school because education can expand their capability to aspire, allowing disadvantaged people to imagine alternative futures for themselves and thus providing a resource for them 'to contest and alter the conditions of their own welfare' (Walker, 2006: 172; see also Appadurai, 2004). The above comments made by female participants about education enabling them to command equal rights and avoid harmful traditional gender relations are thus also accounted for in the human capabilities approach to education.

The comments that children made about using their knowledge to help others are also in line with currently accepted knowledge about why children should go to school. In light of the literature regarding the particular benefits associated with educating girls (Lay and Robilliard, 2009; Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006; see Chapter Two of this thesis), it is noteworthy that it was most

often the older girls at child conferences who spoke about sharing their knowledge with their families and communities, during their childhood years as well as in their future roles as mothers. Being able to care for, provide for and support other people were nonetheless clearly valued capabilities for many participants of both genders, and these motivations again echo proposed lists of universally important capabilities that assert that children should go to school because education can empower them to redistribute resources within their families and to help others (Walker, 2006: 168). At the same time, these motivations for going to school would be appreciated by the human capital thinkers who have highlighted girls' education as particularly fundamental in producing a nation of healthy, competent workers (Lay and Robilliard, 2009; UNICEF, 2004; World Bank, 2001).

The capabilities approach has importantly highlighted the multidimensional nature of human well-being and deprivation, and the fact that people define a 'good' life differently (Biggeri, 2006: 65). As illustrated by the findings from this research, these complexities are important to bear in mind when considering what education has the potential to and does achieve. However, in focusing on people's ability to achieve certain valued functionings, human capabilities research and theorising has often neglected to examine the reasons *why* children and adults place importance on certain capabilities and not others. Similarly, much of the sociological research exploring children's life aspirations has tended to focus on the meanings and aspirations expressed by individual children, rather than examining the structures that are generating or upholding

these motivations (although there are of course some meritable exceptions to this rule - see for example Boyden, 2013; Crivello, 2011; Leavy and Smith, 2010). The findings discussed in this chapter thus add to existing knowledge about why children go to school by illuminating some of the reasons that children gave for wanting their education to make them into 'good' people. The following discussion will pursue this critical analysis further, exploring where these motivations were coming from and examining some of the generative mechanisms that were leading children to think that education was the way to respectability and morality.

6.6 Where do these motivations for going to school come from?

This research sought to understand where children's understandings of their schooling and motivations originated, and the constraining and enabling factors that were leading them actively to choose to invest in their education. As with children's motivations for going to school that related to getting a job, the motivation to go to school in order to become a 'good' person did not originate from narrow instrumental considerations, nor simply from normative expectations placed upon children. Instead it was shaped by discursive and structural factors that were enacted and reproduced in both children's interpersonal relations with others and broader social relations.

6.6.1 Moral motivations as 'ultimate concerns'

As already discussed, children's desire to go to school in order to become 'good' people can be understood as an 'ultimate concern', stemming from their 'inner being' and 'ideas of the good' (Alderson, 2013; Tao, 2013). As well as this

inherent morality, which is one fundamental aspect of being human, participants' vulnerability and human need to be loved and accepted was also motivating them to go to school (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013 Sayer, 2011: 113).

However, although this theorising of children's agency enables us to understand what was motivating the children who participated in this research to act, it does not explain their conviction that participation in formal education was the route to achieving their 'ideas [of] the good life' or 'ultimate concerns' (Alderson, 2013: 62; Archer, 2000: 10). In order to explain why children identified going to school as the route to 'becoming the best man or girl', it is necessary to turn to the generative mechanisms operating beyond their 'inner being', which are never wholly deterministic, but which condition human action. These generative mechanisms operated both in children's interpersonal relationships with others, and in the wider social relations shaping their understandings and actions.

6.6.2 Social norms about what it meant to be a good child in Hawassa

Firstly, children's narratives about going to school to become 'good' revealed the influence of powerful social norms about the morality of children who did and did not go to school. As has been evident throughout this chapter, participants were convinced that schooling – in many and varied ways – made them better children. Numerous focus group discussions focused on the contrast between 'good' 'At School' children, and 'bad' children who did not go to school; a dichotomy that was reinforced by the assumption among many participants that children who did not attend did so out of their own choice. As

discussed at the beginning of this chapter, participants often attributed other children's non-attendance or drop-out to lack of motivation, suggesting that children were not at school because of an autonomous act of agency; because they didn't want to go, because they 'didn't like learning', or because they hadn't been told of – or understood - the benefits of education. The grade six students at SOS private school asserted that the imagined 'at school' child 'cares about his future life' whilst the child not in education 'doesn't care about tomorrow or the future'. At times, participants' comments were rather ambiguous with regards to whether the poor morality of out-of-school children was understood to be a cause or a consequence of non-attendance. Either way, they point to a dominant social perception about the morality of education that is encouraging children to attend school in order to be seen as 'good' people. The children who took part in this research did not want to be perceived as uneducated children were; as lazy, immoral, of no use and therefore an embarrassment to their family and country.

Children in Hawassa were subject to these discursive mechanisms in Bhaskar's second 'plane' of being; in their interpersonal, subjective relationships with others (Bhaskar, 2008; see Chapter Two of this thesis). Girum, lead teacher at SOS private school, reported that if a child was not attending school, not only their family and education professionals but also members of the community would compel them to do so; asking them 'why don't you go to school?'. Girum's description of this community 'pressure' confirmed the dominant notion underlying my conversations with different adults in Hawassa, who

seemed to take for granted that school was the best place for children, and construed schoolchildren as the lucky generation who stood to gain from the benefits of education, modernity and economic prosperity. This cultural expectation that children would attend school illustrates the fact that the 'education gospel' (Grubb and Lazerson, 2006) or the 'persuasive and persistent public discourse that equates high formal education with life course success' (Lehman, 2009: 143) had been widely taken on by both adults and children in Hawassa, despite mass schooling having only recently become 'the norm'. It supports Morrow's claim that 'the mantra of Education for All appears to have been thoroughly taken on board by parents and children in the global South', despite going to school having only recently become 'the norm' (Morrow, 2013: 258).

The 'deficit' model of children and childhood that was discussed in Chapter Five was also being propagated in children's interpersonal relations with others. In particular, teachers often held a view of children as deficient in their attitudes and morality. For instance, Girum, the senior teacher at SOS private school, reported that the biggest problem or 'challenge' facing his school was 'students' discipline'. In particular, although he believed that there were positives that could result from children's exposure to other cultures, Girum was concerned that what he termed 'globalisation' and in particular children's exposure to Western films and other media was leading his students to learn 'bad' behaviours and ways of thinking, including a lack of respect for their elders.

Indeed, when I asked Girum what the ‘most important skills and capabilities’ that he wanted children to leave his school with were, he replied that

Our school is an academic school [...] but first of all our vision
or our interest is to change the attitude of our children.

Girum and other teachers in Hawassa were telling children that they came to school in order to be improved and transformed. The findings discussed in this and the previous chapter have already demonstrated the high regard in which many of the young participants in this research held their teachers. With teachers both telling them that they were at school because they needed improvement, and that children who did not come to school were morally deficient, strong pressures existed towards children internalising this deficit view of themselves and other children.

Observations and conversations with other adults and children in Hawassa further reflected this association of schooling with ‘goodness’. Interestingly, there seemed to be an element of ‘peer pressure’ in encouraging children in Hawassa to go to school to improve their morality, as evident in the grade eight participants’ child-to-child interview exchanges, in which they quizzed each other about whether they were good students, whether they worked hard and so on. However, this might well have reflected children’s desire to present themselves in a good light in the presence of an adult, rather than a typical exchange between young people. The young participants who took part in focus groups, interviews and child conferences were not observed interacting with their friends in naturalistic settings, and so it is not possible to comment on

whether they placed such emphasis on morality and behaviour in the absence of adults. Similarly, these children were not observed at home, or in interaction with their parents. However, observation of other families in Hawassa indicated that parents, like teachers, were promoting the idea of education as moral training, and emphasising the importance of their respectability. This was underscored by the culture of *yilunta* discussed above, and the idea that, by going to school, children not only brought honour to themselves, but made their families respectable in the eyes of others. Abebe and Kjørholt (2009) have described how children in Ethiopia 'are valued as part of the family collective, not as autonomous individuals occupying independent positions in society', and thus 'are likely to perceive their needs as interdependent with those of other family members rather than taking priority over them' (Abebe and Kjørholt, 2009: 178). The importance of interdependency and responsibility in notions of morality has been highlighted elsewhere in Africa, too. Most notably, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child [ACRWC] states that alongside children's rights come responsibilities, including the duty to assist their families and serve their national community (OAU, 1990). The expectations and tensions expressed by the young participants in this research did not entirely reflect an interdependent, self-sacrificing outlook, and indeed some children seemed torn between their own wants and the desires of their families. However, participants did demonstrate a strong sense of obligation and collective identity.

The influence of the culture of *yilunta* reveals how broader social relations and cultural norms, as well as individual relationships, were encouraging children in Hawassa to identify education as the means to becoming ‘good’ and loved. Moreover, the influence of international as well as local norms about childhood is evident. After all, the schoolchild has not always been the image of the ‘good’ or traditional child in Ethiopian culture, as illustrated by the fact that when the EPRDF came to power early 1990s, less than one in five children were enrolled in school (UNESCO, 2014). Instead, this model of a scholarly childhood reflects the historically specific idea that school is good and appropriate for children and accordingly that work and ‘the streets’ are inappropriate and represent deviance. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, this idea was exported by Western colonialists in the twentieth century and now dominates thinking about children and childhood across the world. Today, INGOs and international organisations such as the UN and World Bank encourage the notion that children will pass on what they learn at school, for example with regard to health and hygiene, to their present and future families (see for example UNDP, 2011; UNMP, 2005; USAID Ethiopia, 2011). This idea has been incorporated into the social and civics curricula in Ethiopia (see for example MoE, 2009), and such strategies were clearly shaping children in Hawassa’s ideas about why they went to school.

6.6.3 Social norms about what it meant to be a good adult in Hawassa

As well as notions of what it meant to be a good child, children’s understandings of and motivations for engaging with education were shaped by social norms about what it meant to be a good adult in Hawassa. Bemnet (15)

summed up societal attitudes to work, education and the link between the two when she accounted that ‘the best mans are professional mans’. The group of boys at the first child conference discussed the importance that they placed on ‘having a good business and being successful’, revealing their imagining of a respectable, adult future.

Again, children in Hawassa were subjected to these norms and expectations at both an individual and societal level. When children spoke about needing to complete their schooling and consequently to gain a good job in order to win respect from society and to feel proud of themselves, it reflected internationally dominant ideas about adulthood and the morality of independence. Children understood themselves primarily as ‘human becomings’, working towards adulthood (Abebe and Kjørholt, 2009: 192), and believed that they would become adults when they gained employment, and – crucially – when they gained financial independence from their parental households. These findings uphold other research that has found gaining employment and achieving independence from one’s parents to be central to social conceptions of adulthood in Ethiopia and across Africa, and accordingly that without achieving these indicators of status, young people will be unable to live a life that they truly value (Camfield, 2011b; Honwana, 2012; Mains, 2007; Sommers, 2012, Tranberg Hansen, 2005). Moreover, these notions of adulthood are not constrained to Africa, but represent broader, neoliberal ideas of meritocracy and individual responsibility as well as the divide constructed between ‘childhood’ and ‘adulthood’ that has been discussed throughout this thesis.

Around the world, social researchers and theorists have been pointing to a generation unable to achieve certain indicators of independence and financial autonomy that are associated with adulthood (Barker and Ricardo, 2005, Jeffrey *et al.*, 2005, Mason, 2012, Tranberg Hansen, 2005). These global discursive structures, upheld by institutional and economic mechanisms, were conditioning children in Hawassa's thoughts and actions in relation to their school attendance.

Children's comments about wishing that they could decide what they would 'do in their life', and about being 'forbidden' by their parents to become actors, dancers or footballers reveal the immense pressure to follow certain career and life paths being exerted on children in Hawassa by their families. Teachers, likewise, were encouraging children to pursue their dreams, but often only certain, acceptable dreams. Children had never mentioned such 'alternative' career aspirations as becoming footballers or athletes in individual interviews, perhaps suggesting that they were aware of and felt obliged to express what were considered respectable futures in front of Ethiopian adults. The professional occupations that children *had* reported aspiring to, such as medicine and the law, represent middle-class forms of success and respectability that are recognisable across the modern, capitalist world, as well as the social norms specific to Ethiopia that we saw in Chapter Five (Lehman, 2009). These alternative careers, on the other hand, might be understood as representing 'new' forms of respectability associated with celebrity and fame

(Marshall, 2006). Again this reveals the influence of discourses of morality and respectability, not only at a local level, but at an international level too.

6.7 Do these narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa was expanding children's valued capabilities?

As discussed in Chapter Two, an important aspect of critical realist research is that it is normative as well as descriptive and explanatory, and thus allows us to evaluate and compare social practices, including educational interventions (Mark *et al.*, 1999; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Sayer, 2011). This research sought to consider whether the non-economic capabilities that children in Hawassa wished to be expanded by their education were of merit, and to question the extent to which their schooling appeared to be expanding these capabilities.

Many of the non-economic functionings that participants wanted their education to make available to them were of great value. Their discussions about being able to share useful knowledge with those around them and to share both the social and economic benefits of their education with others, for example, highlight some highly crucial functions of education (Biggeri, 2007; Walker, 2006; Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006). Moreover, children's education did seem to be imparting them with important practical knowledge. For example, their experiences of learning about personal hygiene and the dangers of alcohol and drug addiction highlight the importance of education in empowering children to have command over their health and bodily integrity. The findings from this research with children in Hawassa also confirm other research in Ethiopia that has found that civic education in particular is empowering girls to protect themselves from harmful gendered norms and

practices including early marriage and rape (Tamene, 2007). As discussed above, Mekdela (15, Union Academy private school) spoke specifically about how schooling would benefit girls and women by empowering them to demand their rights in the home and protect themselves from maltreatment, and Tigist, aged 13 and studying at SOS private school, also asserted that girls getting jobs after leaving school would lead to 'equal rights' in Ethiopia. Capabilities theorists such as Robeyns (2006: 78) have listed 'leaving an abusive marriage' among the many capabilities which can be expanded via an effective education, and these were clear examples of young girls feeling empowered by their schooling to 'contest and alter the conditions of their own welfare' (Walker, 2006: 172). Furthermore, this research found boys and girls in Hawassa to have similar career aspirations, across both government and private schools, and female participants' high aspirations and expectations demonstrate the capacity that education has to 'widen the opportunities of both men and women to lead the lives they truly value, rather than follow uncritically some (unspoken) scripts that are dominant in their communities' (Robeyns, 2006: 71). These findings, like other research elsewhere in Africa, illuminate the powerful potential of schooling to empower girls to stand up for their own rights and to 'imagine alternative futures' for themselves, challenging traditional approaches to marriage and gender (see also Robeyns, 2006; Tamene, 2007; Walker, 2005: 173). On the basis of this empirical evidence, educational provision in Hawassa should be commended for contributing to human development in this way.

However, observations in Hawassa also confirmed that traditional gender norms persisted in everyday interactions in the school (Alemayehu, 2007).

Tigist, who talked about 'equal rights' above, loved football, always wore trousers and cropped her hair short. She spoke about the conflicts she endured with her teachers and her housemother at the children's village where she lived, regarding her choice of clothing, career aspirations and choice of – all male – friends. Tigist was the only female participant to talk about getting in trouble at school for fighting. Although I never witnessed teachers engage in anything but friendly 'joking' with Tigist, they clearly framed her as deviant, often laughing at her style and asking me what I thought of her 'wanting to be a boy'. This stereotyping of gender ideals reveals that girls in Hawassa are still expected to adhere to the submissiveness and silence that can inhibit their success at school (Alemayehu, 2007; Tamene, 2007). Negative treatment of girls who subvert these norms may also lead these individual children to withdraw from participation in school, where their personalities are not respected or valued (Nussbaum, 2006: 387; Tamene, 2007; Walker, 2006). Tigist herself told me that she did not want to keep attending school, and that her housemother made her. However, she explained this lack of motivation to continue with education by saying that school was irrelevant to her dream of becoming a football player, rather than any negative experiences she was having whilst at school. Nonetheless, and as will be discussed further in Chapter Seven, Tigist had said at another point that she wanted to work hard and become a prime minister. Discouraging ambitious and intelligent girls like Tigist, by suppressing their individuality and difference, may inhibit their educational progression and

achievement in the future, as well as their confidence, self-worth and well-being more generally.

These gender ideals are reinforced by the culture of *yilunta* discussed above.

Girls who 'act like boys' not only invite trouble for themselves, but face bringing shame and dishonour to their families. The persistence of such gender norms in Hawassa reflects the fact that although education might have been empowering children to challenge traditions such as early marriage and domestic abuse, it continued to transmit normative scripts – albeit alternative ones – and to encourage young people to behave within these norms, rather than encouraging children's critical thought and political engagement. As discussed in Chapter Two, capabilities theorists have argued that education can cultivate public debate, enabling people to organise politically, empowering the marginalised and providing individuals with the resources needed to debate the false discourses and social structures that lead to their disadvantage (Walker, 2006; Watts *et al.*, 2008). Education therefore has the potential to contribute to social change, foster democracy, and improve individuals' lives (Walker, 2006: 168). However, schooling in Hawassa was not fulfilling this potential. Instead, it encouraged conformity and passivity. For instance, Girum, a senior teacher at SOS private school, said that the 'most important skills and capabilities' that he wanted children to leave his school with were tolerance, respect for rules and regulations, and 'exemplary' behaviour. Similarly, as detailed above, children referred to their 'ethical' education in terms of learning to follow the rules and norms of society. Participants presented this socialisation in a positive light, but

this form of education was constraining some fundamental aspects of children's capabilities and freedom by encouraging conformity rather than critical thinking and individuality. To use the language of the emancipatory education paradigm discussed in Chapter Two, schools in Hawassa were transmitting 'merely useful knowledge' that maintained the status quo, rather than encouraging the creation of 'really useful knowledge' that would enable students to reflect upon their circumstances and bring about radical change (Johnson, 1979). In the light of education research that has identified socialisation for leadership rather than submission in 'elite schools' in the Global North (Harber, 1991: 251), it is telling that students from the two private schools in this research were – as a general rule although not without exceptions – more confident and had higher aspirations than their government school counterparts, and indeed seemed to have a 'sense of being special' (Harber, 1991: 251). The two participants who reported that they wanted to become heads of state in the future came from private schools. It seemed therefore that private school students in Hawassa were more likely being prepared for leadership, whilst those in government schools were prepared for their lower place in the societal hierarchy. Although all four schools stressed rules, regulations and formality, the two private institutions seemed to place more emphasis on children's participation than their government counterparts. Though rote learning remained the norm within the classroom, pupils in these schools were afforded some autonomy and responsibility in the wider life of the school, for example through Student Councils. However, both schools largely reinforced norms of co-operation and obedience.

As discussed in Chapter Two, although education is promoted around the world as part of a neoliberal package of development and as key to achieving liberal democracy, economic progress and the promotion of human rights, sociologists of education have highlighted the ways in which schooling can also act as an instrument of class domination and social control (Johnson, 1970; Katz, 1976). This critique is illuminating on two levels when considering the moral facets of education in Hawassa. Firstly, it seems that the tireless promotion of education as the route to democracy, enlightenment and 'development' in all senses of the word by international organisations might be part of an endeavour to further a certain set of political and civic values by global elites on the world's poor that mirrors the attempts of national elites to spread middle class values through newly created education systems in the 19th century (see Carnoy, 1974; Tikly, 2004). Secondly, a number of the processes observed in schools in Hawassa are exemplary of the socialisation processes that Marxist historians of education such as Humphries (1981), Johnson (1970, 1979) and Katz (1976) have criticised in the minority world. Participants' narratives about their moral education indicate without doubt that the Ethiopian education system is being used to propagate a certain set of values, relations and aspirations that reinforce the political status quo. The analysis in Chapter Five revealed the ways in which students recognised that their schooling in Hawassa was socialising them into the work ethic and deference to authority needed to become workers in the emerging capitalist economy, and children's description of the school as a moral haven, and their particular emphasis on the guiding role of

their teachers, echoes Johnson's description of the Victorian, middle-class
imagining of the school:

Supervised by its trusty teacher, surrounded by its playground
wall, the school was to raise a new race of working people -
respectful, cheerful, hard-working, loyal, pacific and religious.

(Johnson, 1970: 119)

The official curriculum in Ethiopia promotes obedience, deference and respect for authority, and the 'hidden curriculum' of authority relationships in these four schools was likewise formal and authoritarian, characterised by power relations that encouraged passivity and obedience. The 'hidden curriculum' describes the way in which power relationships in schools are 'transmitted as inevitable and unchangeable', thus normalising and naturalising authoritarian, asymmetrical systems of social organisation in children's minds (Harber, 1991: 249). In the same way that the establishment of school systems in the global North in the 19th century was designed to promote 'punctuality, regularity, docility, and deferral of gratification' needed to prepare children to work in a new social and economic order (Katz, 1976: 395) and to legitimise and reproduce capitalist social relations (Humphries, 1981), the hidden curriculum in Hawassa shaped children to be productive and cooperative actors in progress towards the government's vision for Ethiopia's development in the global economy. Eyob, director of Union Academy, articulated the belief underlying the Ethiopian education system succinctly;

E: I believe that education can change or we can change everything through education [...]

Q: For example?

E: You know education can change the life of the student. [It] can change the behaviour of a child. And [that] can even be a pillar – a source for development

Q: For the development of the country?

E: Ya

The next chapter of this thesis will explain that the creation of a new generation of diligent and obedient workers who are loyal to the national cause has been understood as fundamental in the promotion of national cohesion in the face of ethnic divisions in Ethiopia. However, in doing this, the education system was also reproducing and legitimising highly unequal power relations, reinforcing the dominance of neo-liberal ideas of individual responsibility and failure and exacerbating the lack of freedom of speech in Ethiopia. In this way it cannot be understood as promoting development in terms of democracy or human freedom.

On the other hand, it is important to recognise that children 'are not empty vessels, waiting to be filled with adult values', but rather active participants and negotiators of the discourses communicated to them (Stephens, 1995: 23). For instance, Tigist, who was often disparaged and punished for her contravention

of gender norms, was resisting the normative pressures placed upon her to act 'appropriately' for her gender role. Moreover, as well as the fact of girls simply being present in schools being an indicator of changing social norms, the fact that schools were not directly enforcing gendered dress codes, for example, suggests that children's negotiation of adult values was resulting in real and significant change. Moreover, children were drawing on alternative discourses of success and respectability, such as those depicted in the global media.

6.8 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter has explored children in Hawassa's belief that going to school would transform them into good people as well as good workers.

The first research question (Q1) addressed by this research asked

*What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school,
and what do they expect to gain from their education?*

The findings discussed in this chapter have demonstrated that the young participants in this research believed that both the knowledge that they gained at school and the explicit moral guidance and training that they received at the hands of their teachers made them better children in the present, and meant that they would become good adults. For these children, being a good person meant being able to provide for oneself and others, knowing about moral and social issues and being able to share that knowledge with others, and being well behaved, disciplined and respectable.

The second research question (Q2) set out in Chapter One asked

*To what extent are these reasons for going to school
consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses
about the purposes and value of education?*

Children in Hawassa's accounts of their education as transforming them into good people as well as good workers demonstrate the inadequacy of human capital accounts of education that only consider the economic impact of children's schooling. The reasons that children gave for going to school are more comprehensively accounted by the human capabilities approach to education, which has asserted that the role of education should be to expand people's valued capabilities, including their capacity to conduct human relationships, to care for and provide for themselves and others, and to participate fully in society.

The 'moral' motivations for going to school expressed by participants in this research in Hawassa also uphold other research with children and young people around the world that has found love, security, care, friendship, respect, empathy and recognition to be among children's most highly valued capabilities and central to children's well-being (Biggeri, 2007; Camfield and Tefere, 2009; Walker, 2006). However, much of the sociological research exploring children's life aspirations and motivations for going to school has tended to focus on these meanings and aspirations expressed by individual children, which can be understood in the language of critical realism as human, or 'ultimate concerns'. This research sought to go beyond such interpretivist understanding, to come to a more comprehensive and critical appreciation of the structures interacting

with and upholding or constraining such ultimate concerns. The third research questions (Q3) thus asked

What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?

The findings discussed in this chapter add to existing knowledge about why children go to school by illuminating the ways in which multiple generative mechanisms interacted in order to lead children in Hawassa to identify participation in formal education as the key to becoming both someone who they could be proud of being, and someone who others would recognise, accept and love. Specifically, participants' explanations of their educational participation relied on normative social scripts about what it meant to be a good child and a good adult in contemporary, urban Ethiopia that were rooted in local and global historical, political and economic processes. The influence of these discourses demonstrates that children were not enacting 'pure' agency in a vacuum, and acting as entirely rational economic cost-benefit decision-makers. Instead, they were making decisions and acting in the context of material and cultural pressures that encouraged school attendance. This is not to say that children in Hawassa were simply going to school because they were mindlessly following these normative scripts, however. Although participants' motivations for going to school were shaped by norms regarding what it meant to be a good person in contemporary, urban Ethiopia, for many the choice to attend was an active one that went beyond normatively constituted behaviour.

A number of children reported barriers to their educational participation, including domestic responsibilities and temptations of other lifestyles, and not all families in Hawassa encouraged children to go to school all of the time. Many children were actively choosing education as the means through which to achieve social adulthood and thus to gain acceptance, care and affection, as well as to fulfill their aspirations for better ways of living than they and their parents were currently experiencing. Children's values, motivations and courses of action with regard to their school attendance therefore need to be understood 'in the context of capability, vulnerability and precarious well-being or flourishing, and [their] tendency to form attachments and commitments' as well as in the light of broad social, economic and political structures (Sayer, 2011: 6). It is these aspects of humanity that are responsible for elevating people's – both adults' and children's – behaviour beyond its normatively constituted forms.

The final question (Q4) addressed by this research asks

To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?

On the basis of the above ideas about individual and collective capabilities, it might seem that listening to children in Hawassa has illuminated positive functions of education that are less regularly accounted for in development and policy literature than the often-proposed economic benefits of schooling. On the other hand, the evidence reviewed in this chapter has revealed that the

education in Hawassa was designed to produce a certain kind of 'moral' person; promoting obedience, cooperation and respect rather than independence, critical reflection and progressive thought. In this way, education was acting as a form of social control rather than a source of human development. The following chapter will pursue this argument further, considering the reasons that children gave for going to school that related not only to becoming good workers and good people, but good citizens too. It explores the ways in which children's desire to gain employment and improve in behaviour and morality often stemmed from their commitment to their national community as well as their individual concerns. It asks why this was the case, and whether children's narratives about going to school 'to help Ethiopia' suggested that education in Hawassa was expanding or constraining their individual and collective capabilities.

Chapter Seven: Going to school to help Ethiopia

7.1 Introduction

As a reminder, the research discussed in this thesis investigated the following research question:

In the urban African context of Hawassa, Ethiopia, what motivates children to go to school, and to what extent do children's explanations of their schooling correspond with dominant arguments for universal primary education?

In doing so, it sought to answer the following sub-questions:

- Q1 *What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school, and what do they expect to gain from their education?*
- Q2 *To what extent are these reasons for going to school consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses about the purposes and value of education?*
- Q3 *What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?*
- Q4 *To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?*

The analysis in preceding chapters has revealed that the children who took part in this research understood education to be highly relevant to their lives, and gave various reasons for their going to school (Q1). The discussion in Chapter Five explored the employment-related motivations for going to school

expressed by the children who took part in this research, before Chapter Six examined the reasons for going to school that children reported in relation to the idea of going to school in order to become a good and moral person.

Analysis of these findings has demonstrated that children's expectations of their education were at times in line with dominant ideas about what the role and objectives of education, but at some times surpassed such orthodoxy (Q2). In particular, the findings discussed in both chapters demonstrated the limitations of orthodox, human capital arguments for children's education that overlook the non-economic, valued capabilities that going to school has the potential to expand. They thus illustrate the importance of including children in conversations about the purposes of education.

The analysis in this thesis has also demonstrated that although children's motivations for going to school stemmed from their moral concerns, these 'ultimate' concerns are not in themselves sufficient to explain why children in Hawassa go to school. Instead, they interacted with external generative mechanisms that encouraged children's school attendance at this moment in place and time (Q3). The analysis in Chapter Four reviewed the policies that the EPRDF government had put into place in order to encourage Ethiopian children's school attendance, and which – as demonstrated throughout Chapters Five and Six – made going to school ideologically 'normal' as well as physically possible for children in Hawassa. The analysis in Chapters Five and Six demonstrated that children's understandings of their education and motivations for going to school were shaped by these policies, as well as by

their interpersonal relationships with influential adults, by the globalised media and by the material and economic pressures that impacted upon their lives.

Finally, the analysis in Chapters Five and Six revealed that although children experienced their education as empowering them to command desired economic and non-economic outcomes, their narratives suggested that schooling in Hawassa may have in fact been simultaneously expanding some important individual and collective capabilities and constraining others (Q4). In particular, education in Hawassa seemed to be designed in order to produce productive workers for the capitalist economy, and obedient, cooperative and 'respectful children and adults, rather than people capable of critical reflection and progressive thought.

In this chapter, the same critical lens is turned to the claim made by many children in Hawassa that they attended primary school in order to become good citizens who were able to 'help' Ethiopia. The analysis in this chapter explores the motivations for going to school that participants expressed not only in relation to their own interests or those of their families, but also in terms of the anticipated benefits for their nation (Q1). It examines the different ways in which children in Hawassa believed that their education would benefit Ethiopia, and the reasons that they gave for wanting it to do so. This is followed by a consideration of how children's narratives about going to school to 'help' Ethiopia compare to the dominant understandings of the role of formal schooling that were discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis (Q2). In particular,

children's motivations for going to school are compared to ideas about education as an investment in human capital and human capabilities.

Following this, the analysis turns to examining the generative mechanisms encouraging children to go to school in order to contribute to the development of their country (Q3). The cultural, structural and institutional factors that were leading children in Hawassa to be so committed to the 'imagined community' of Ethiopia (Anderson, 1983), and to believe that formal education was the route to national as well as progress are examined. Finally, the analysis in this chapter considers the extent to which children's narratives suggested that schooling in Hawassa was expanding their individual and collective capabilities, and thus empowering children to achieve the lives that they had reason to value, or rather constraining them to a narrow model of national development and progress that was disempowering and oppressive (Q4).

7.2 Going to School to Develop Ethiopia

The findings discussed in Chapter Six revealed that, in order to see themselves and to be seen by others as a good person, children felt that they needed to be able to help and provide for others. For many children, this notion extended not only to their families and local communities, but also to the national community of Ethiopia. When Mekdela (female, 15, Union Academy) asked her grade eight classmate Mirinda (13) why she thought she was 'learning', for example, Mirinda said that she was learning so that she would be able to help other people; specifically 'orphan people, then my family and [...] my country'. Dinknesh and Mahilet, two 15-year-old girls in Grade Seven at Gebeye Dar

government school, both similarly asserted in their individual interviews that they went to school in order to help themselves, their families and their nation. In focus group discussions, grade three students from Gebeye Dar said that they went to school to develop their country, and grade five and grade eight groups at Adare government school and Union Academy private school respectively said that the imagined 'At School' child was able to develop his or her country. The grade eight students at Union also reported that being able to develop Ethiopia was among the things they liked most about going to school. Whilst the other four focus groups did not use the word 'development', they all talked about children going to school to 'help [their] country', to help other people and/or to bring honour to their country.

Participants emphasised this theme even more strongly during the child conferences. Before hearing the report about 'going to school to develop Ethiopia' (see chapter Three, *Appendix 3*), attendees at both conferences were anxious to add to the first two reports about 'going to school to get a job' and 'to become a good person', stressing that they did not go to school only to help themselves, but also to help their nation. During the first child conference, children added to the report that they went to school 'to develop our country', 'to avoid ignorance in our society', 'to change [the] economy' and 'to change the unwanted history of Ethiopia'. Attendees at the second child conference, meanwhile, added that 'if somebody learns in a good way it will help Ethiopia', and that 'today's readers [will be] tomorrow's leaders'. At these child conferences, participants particularly emphasised a perceived link between

their individual employment prospects and the economic, political and social prospects of their nation, explaining that the importance of getting jobs as a result of their schooling was in part that this would enable them to ‘help’, ‘develop’, ‘support’ and ‘change’ Ethiopia. The professions capable of helping the nation that participants listed echoed the catalogue of desired jobs discussed in earlier chapters, including doctors, engineers and scientists.

As with their ideas about education leading to employment and morality, participants like Mekdela fortified their assertion that educated children were able to help their country by contrasting this with the capacities of children who did not attend school;

A child who goes to school, when he grow up, he will have a good job [but] the child who don’t go to school, they have a tiny job [and so] they cannot even help [them]self.

(Mekdela, female, 15, Union Academy)

Grade six students at SOS private school likewise asserted that the ‘Not at School’ child ‘can’t help other people because he doesn’t learn’, whilst grade five students at Adare government school imagined the child being upset and saying ‘I cannot use my time for my country’.

7.3 How did children expect their schooling to help Ethiopia?

During the initial round of focus groups and interviews, children rarely expanded on what they meant by ‘development’, or by being able to ‘help’ their country, and did not explain *how* they believed that their education would

advance the prospects of Ethiopia. This lack of clarification suggested that this idea of 'going to school to help Ethiopia' might be a conviction being propagated in schools that participants were echoing without real understanding or agreement. However, in some conversations with individual children and in the later child conferences, it became apparent that many participants did believe that their education would benefit their country and, moreover, had firm ideas about the mechanisms through which they believed this would happen. Children also talked with great commitment about how important it was that their education would help Ethiopia.

7.3.1 Human capital

The findings discussed in Chapter Five exposed the primary mechanism through which participants believed that their education would benefit their country. In line with the human capital model of education as a contributor to economic development, many children talked about their education – via their (assumed) improved employment prospects – enabling them to bring in money that would 'change the economy' and would consequently make Ethiopia independent from other countries. The school staff who were interviewed in Hawassa likewise emphasised the national, economic benefits of education. Meskerem, who was the principal at Gebeye Dar government school, reported that education was 'important' for a nation's growth; 'economically, politically and socially'. Staff from the two private schools specifically cited the importance of the human capital needed for the development of agricultural and technological industries in Ethiopia, and for success in the global economy:

[Private schools] choose English as a medium of instruction [...]

Because now we are living the period – in the period of globalisation. To be competitive [...] is very special or crucial. There are schools who use vernacular language or local language, but our interest is in English.

(Girum, Lead Teacher, SOS private school)

In one way or the other way, education can contribute for a country development. So there are different kinds of fields in universities that the country needs. So the students join [...] different fields in the universities, and they be - they get different capacity and skills, so when they get a job they can contribute something for their country [...] in their field, they can contribute something for this country [...] The country or the government policy [emphasises] science fields. So that's why we are working hardly on science subjects [...] because it's agriculture led industry.

(Eyob, Director, Union Academy private school)

Even in different working situations that do not require that much of education, [...] it is better worked with a person who is educated. Even if that job [...] do not require an education, the educated people is better. For example in Ethiopia agriculture is the backbone of our economy. The government

believes that you know even farmers [...] an educated farmer
[can] easily utilise you know different scientific inventions [...]
Whether we continue it up to higher levels or not, an
educated person can do better.

(Girum, Lead Teacher, SOS private school)

7.3.2 Entering skilled professions

Echoing the sentiments expressed by those staff members at the two private schools, many participants wanted to enter skilled professions that would directly contribute to national progress in the form of social improvements. As Abebe, an 11-year-old student in grade three at Gebeye Dar government school asserted, educated citizens were expected to ‘pay our time [and] our energy [...] so we bring our country to be one of those [developed] countries in the world’. Abebe said that he wanted to study hard and become a doctor so that he would be a ‘good man’ and be able to help other people.

Becoming a doctor was often cited as a profession through which children could benefit their country. Alamudin (14, Union Academy), for example, said in his individual interview that he wanted to be a doctor so that he could ‘solve the problem’ in Ethiopia where patients in rural areas were dying because of a lack of qualified doctors. Alamudin saw a direct trajectory between his education, his future work and being able to help his country in a tangible and life-or-death way. Alamudin’s classmate Makdes (14), who also wanted to become a doctor in order to help her country, likewise specified that if she did not get her education, she could not fulfill this aim.

Other professions were also cited as being beneficial for Ethiopia as a nation. At the first child conference, all three groups stressed the importance of educating engineers who could build roads, schools and hospitals, 'make electric power and river stops [dams]' and develop 'natural and man-made places for tourist attraction'. Boys at this conference also said that an educated child could support Ethiopia by becoming a teacher and 'giving knowledge for students', or by becoming a researcher by 'bring[ing] information from the universe' and helping Ethiopia to 'avoid disease'. Atnafu (male, 10, SOS private school) said that educated children could help their country by working for social services, and Enyew (male, nine, Union Academy) said that children could 'specialise' to help their country by becoming lawyers or government officials as well as doctors.

7.3.3 Political capabilities

Tigist (female, 13, SOS private school), meanwhile, wanted to help Ethiopia by becoming Prime Minister. When asked if she meant Prime Minister of Ethiopia Tigist said yes, and then changed her mind; no, she wanted to be 'Prime Minister of the USA'. This job does not exist, and becoming President of the USA an impossible ambition for someone of Ethiopian citizenship (!). Tigist later said that she wanted to be a footballer, and so perhaps her confusion about which country she wanted to be 'Prime Minister' of reflects the fact that this was what she anticipated to be a desired response, rather than a genuine plan for her future. Tigist's statement nonetheless revealed her confidence that schooling in Hawassa could prepare children like her for a role in politics. She reported that her education would equip her for this important job because at her school she

learnt to communicate with others, meaning that she would be confident and unafraid when she had to talk to other politicians and presidents. Yonatan (10), who was in grade four at the other private school, similarly asserted that that going to school instilled him with knowledge that he could use to lead his country. Being able to lead his or her country was also a frequently cited reason for the imagined 'At School' child to go to school:

The educated ones, they become the president of the country.

Through this, they can help their country.

(Ammanuel; male, 12, Union Academy private school)

Q: So why do you think children go to school?

A: [...]to get knowledge, and also to be good leader of the country

(Interview exchange with Asna; female, 11, Gebeye Dar
government school)

Many more participants asserted their belief that education expanded their political capabilities in a broader sense. Mirinda, aged 14 and in grade eight at Union Academy private school, declared that children who go to school would be creative and have 'new' knowledge that enabled them 'to know and make decisions about politics'. Her classmate Alamudin (male, 14) likewise said that children who went to school could develop Ethiopia by acting in the nation's interest, and reported that going to school instilled students with an awareness

of how ‘to solve the country’s problems’, including the ‘problem’ of rural health that he had already spoken of (see above).

This desire to lead Ethiopia and to solve the country’s ‘problems’ reflect the fact that – as suggested in Chapter Six – an important element of being a ‘good person’ for the children who took part in this research was being able to share the knowledge and skills that they had gained at school with those around them, including close family but also in their wider networks. The mixed gender group at the first child conference asserted another way in which children wanted to use that which they had gained from their schooling to help others around them. This group asserted that education would bring ‘peace for our country’. At the same conference, the all-female group also reported that going to school to become better people was important because it would bring about a ‘peace[ful] life’. This was the same group who had said that going to school meant that they would ‘share love’ and there would ‘not be quarrel’ (Chapter Six, page 212).

7.3.4 Changing Ethiopia’s reputation

A final way in which participants felt that their education enabled them to help Ethiopia was that it enabled them to improve the country’s global reputation. When participants at the second child conference were invited to write on post-it notes if there was anything in the reports about going to school ‘to get a job’ or ‘to become a good person’ that they disagreed with or felt was missing, one child wrote ‘you didn’t write we want Ethiopia to be known over all other countries’. In both conferences, children spoke about wanting to change the

‘unwanted history’ or ‘image’ of their nation. Boys at the first child conference said that children went to school in order ‘to increase the confidence of Ethiopia’, and ‘to increase the relationship [between] Ethiopia [and] other countr[ies]’. They believed that the rest of the world viewed Ethiopia negatively, and that they and other children could change this unwelcome perception through their education. Comments about Ethiopia’s ‘unwanted history’ implied a view of Ethiopia as deficient and wanting, which, as discussed in Chapter Six, was how children themselves were often presented. However, other narratives about improving Ethiopia’s ‘image’ and changing other people’s *impressions* of Ethiopia suggested that many children did not think Ethiopia was necessarily inferior to the West, but rather misunderstood. Young people’s concern for their country’s global reputation was not only apparent in what they said about schooling, but in their interactions with me as a foreign visitor who held the power to tell other people about them and their country. They were concerned that I should present them in a positive light, as illustrated by the following comments:

Ok I would like to say, put something good for the students in the book. Write something good [about] the students and [tell the] readers something good about our school students.

(Mihiret; female, 13, individual interview).

Other people think we in Ethiopia are poor but we are not.
Please tell them that we have good ideas, good thoughts,

good language and good hospitality. Therefore we are not poor.

(Dagemawit; female, 13).

This second quote comes from an exchange with Dagemawit, when I met her in the street in the town centre. Dagemawit had already raised this idea of telling people in England that Ethiopians were not poor during formal research sessions, but this sentiment was obviously important enough to her that she felt the need to assert herself once again. School students who I encountered beyond my research activities also wanted me to view Ethiopia positively, particularly stressing their country's distinctiveness as an African nation that had never been colonised. After Prime Minister Meles Zenawi died during my fieldwork in 2012, after a long and much covered-up illness, young people I spoke with wanted to impress upon me their deep sadness, despite the fact that some of them disagreed with his political ideals and governance tactics. The lack of free speech in Ethiopia (an issue which will be returned to later in this chapter), along with cultural norms about mourning, meant that it would be incomprehensibly disrespectful for young people not to be visibly saddened by Zenawi's death. Nonetheless, children – and adults – particularly wanted me, as a foreign visitor, to be aware of their bereavement, and thus cognisant of their national identity, morality and goodness.

Children talked about the different ways in which their education would improve their country's reputation. In some instances, participants trusted that their educational attendance itself was enough to gain respect for Ethiopia;

All world people believe Ethiopia is poor country, so [we go to school] to change world image by eradicating poverty from our country by building educational institutions.

(Going to School to Help Ethiopia – poster made by female group at CC1)

When someone is a clever student, his parents is proud of him, they will bless him, and everyone say Ethiopians are clever in school. So in this way Ethiopia will be happy, and developed.

(Bethlem; female, 9, Gebeye Dar government school)

Yohana (female, nine, Union Academy private school), meanwhile, said that educated children would bring honour to their country by '[helping] their families to be the members of the developed world [...] in their vocations'. During both child conferences children linked their aspirations towards respectable future employment (see Chapter Five) to their obligation or desire to bring admiration, as well as economic and social progress, to Ethiopia.

Children also expected that the enhanced behaviour and morality that they anticipated arising from children's education (see Chapter Six) would benefit Ethiopia as a nation. When responding to the report about education shaping children's behaviour and morality, participants at both child conferences linked this morality to the fate of their country, saying that well-behaved students would 'make Ethiopia proud'. At the first child conference, for example, one

member of the female group commented that it was important that education made her into a good person, because 'if we have good behaviour we can change our country within good idea and we didn't do bad thing to our country'.

7.4 Why did children want their education to help Ethiopia?

Although participants made their belief that their schooling should benefit their national community as well as themselves and their families or households unmistakably clear, they often found it hard to articulate why it was that they placed so much importance on this. Children who participated in the child conferences were therefore asked about why they believed it was important for education to benefit Ethiopia.

7.4.1 Self-interest

One explanation that children offered was a perceived link between personal and national prospects. Although children felt varying degrees of responsibility to improve the fate of their nation, they were also expecting their own futures to improve in line with Ethiopia's 'development'. One girl at the first child conference said that 'if our country change we are so happy and we can get a lot of opportunities'. Girls in the same group also recited the phrase 'the development of the country, the development of the people', explaining that it was important that education aided national progress 'because we change as our country changes'. For these girls, their commitment to the national cause was not a sacrificial one, but was instead rooted in self-interest; they believed

that if Ethiopia ‘developed’, their own lives would be improved both materially and socially.

7.4.2 Collective interests

Other motivations that children expressed for wanting to go to school in order to ‘help’ Ethiopia seemed more altruistic. As explained in Chapter Six, being able to help those around them was central to many participants’ conceptions of what it meant to be a ‘good person’. Some children, such as Tigist, expressed concern for future generations of their country. Tigist, who was 13 years old and in grade six at SOS private school, believed that education and its related progress were imperative in securing ‘good services for the next generation’. Similarly, Sultan (aged 11 and studying at Adare government school) argued that ‘if [children] go to school they will get more knowledge [...] they will create an opportunity for others to get education’. These two children were committed to improving the future of Ethiopia beyond the benefits that such improvements would offer to them as individuals.

To many of the young participants in this research, it seemed that asking *why* it was important that their education would help Ethiopia was nonsensical. This responsibility or commitment was so integral to their worldview that, to them, it did not require explanation. Female participants at both child conferences said that their education should help Ethiopia simply ‘because Ethiopia is our country’. These comments reflect a national identity, and a sense of being part of and committed to something bigger – and perhaps more important – than just oneself. In a similar vein, girls at the first child conference stated repeatedly

that helping their country was of importance because they ‘loved’ and respected’ their nation, whilst boys at the second child conference talked about being ‘responsible to serve our country’.

As well as children’s desire to be able to meet the basic needs of themselves and their loved ones (Chapter Five) and their concern with becoming someone that they themselves and others would recognise as ‘good’ and worthy of acceptance and love (Chapter Six), children in Hawassa’s commitment to the collective fate of their national community can be understood as an ‘ultimate’ or moral concern that was ‘pushing’ them to act (Tao, 2013: 8). They cared enough about the collective well-being and honour of their country to want to go to school in order to contribute to these things. Furthermore, the findings discussed in this chapter reveal the links between these three ultimate concerns. On the one hand, some children spoke about expecting the economic and social development of their country to improve the conditions of their own lives. On the other, being able to help one’s country was a key feature of many children’s conceptions of what it meant to be a good child and a good adult. As discussed in Chapter Six, their vulnerability and need for acceptance and respect motivated them to act in ways – including going to school – that would lead others to think that they were good and worthy.

Many of the children who took part in this research in Hawassa were committed to ‘helping’ or ‘developing’ Ethiopia both because it would benefit themselves as individuals *and* because they were committed to the national cause. For the most part a virtuous circle seemed to be anticipated, where contributing to the

future of one's country was expected to help oneself and one's national community. Nonetheless, there were moments where tensions were apparent between children's self-interest and sense of commitment to the national collective, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

7.5 What do these narratives add to debates about why children go to school?

Some of the claims that children in Hawassa made about going to school 'to help Ethiopia' echoed the economically-oriented evaluations of education that are promoted by the World Bank and the Ethiopian government (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2007; MoE, 2010). In linking their individual advancement with national progress, and conceptualising education as an investment in this process, children were implicitly stating the propositions of human capital theory. However, the many non-economic and often non-employment-related functions that children expected their education to fulfill revealed their motivations for going to school to go beyond this limited model of educational participation. In contrast, many of these motives and expectations *are* accounted for in the human capabilities discourse as related to education in the global South. Capabilities theorists have particularly emphasised the importance of education in terms of its capacity to expand children's ability to care for and support others and to spread the benefits of their knowledge amongst their communities (Biggeri *et al.*, 2006; Walker, 2006). Participants' accounts of going to school in order to expand their political capabilities, thus enabling them to participate in political processes and to 'lead' their country are also in line with this human development paradigm. A number of capabilities theorists have

asserted the importance of schooling in equipping individuals to participate in public debate and political decision-making (Robeyns, 2006; Walker, 2005, 2006; Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006). Furthermore, children's notion that the 'development' of Ethiopia would lead to greater opportunities for them as individuals exemplifies Human Development ideas about education as a means to expanding children's multiple valued capabilities and freedoms (Biggeri, 2007; Nussbaum, 2006; Robeyns, 2006; Walker, 2006; Wigley and Akkoyunlu-Wigley, 2006).

On the other hand, Sen's idea of development or education 'as freedom' (Sen, 1999) promotes a more individualistic idea of the benefits of education than that which was expressed by the participants in this research. Sen's capabilities approach recognises the importance of relational functionings such as participation, political engagement and having a cultural identity, and emphasises the role of social influences in constraining individual freedoms and shaping people's conceptions of the good. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, Sen has focused on human capabilities at an individual level, and has rejected the idea that capabilities can be collective, or 'socially dependent' (Sen, 2002: 85). He has not, for instance, accounted for individuals' – such as these children – desire to contribute to the collective future of their nation beyond the benefits that that development might bring for them as individuals. The findings from this research with children in Hawassa highlight the importance of recognising that the exercise of human capabilities often takes place in a collective settings, that well-being and progress can be collective as well as

individual, and that many people place much value on these collective capabilities. As discussed in Chapter Two, some capabilities theorists have developed Sen's ideas about human capabilities in order to account for the importance of collective as well as individual capabilities (see in particular Evans, 2002, Ibrahim, 2006, Stewart, 2005). Listening to children in this context has added to dominant arguments for the expansion of education that tend to focus on *either* the economic benefits to nations and households *or* on the skills and capabilities to be gained by individuals who go to school, by uncovering the collective capabilities that children in Hawassa wanted and expected to be expanded by their education. As will be discussed later in this chapter, unquestioning commitment to a national cause can inhibit as well as expand children's ability to live a life that they have reason to value. However, this research with children in Hawassa has uncovered valued functions of education that are rarely accounted for in the evaluation or in the planning of education for 'development'. It has therefore illuminated the insights and knowledge to be gained by including children in conversations about their schooling and what education should aspire to achieve.

7.6 Where do these motivations for going to school come from?

As with children's motivations for going to school that related to their objectives of gaining employment and becoming 'good' people, it is important to consider the generative mechanisms that were underpinning children's commitment to helping their country through their education. Children in Hawassa's commitment to the national cause and concern that their education

would contribute to an improved future for Ethiopia was striking. As argued above, this spirit of collectivity can be understood as a fundamental moral tendency for these children in Ethiopia, who did not subscribe to 'Western' individualism. However, like children's other motivations for going to school, these commitments and understandings were also shaped by generative mechanisms that require critical examination.

7.6.1 Global politics and structures of power

Children's desires to go to school in order to 'help' Ethiopia were shaped by social relations within and beyond the institution of the school. First, the idea of going to school to help your country is rooted in an international economic system. It is global capitalism, with its supply-side, human capital model of education and belief in the power of markets that underpins the idea that investing in children as production factors will raise a nation from poverty, following in the path of the 'developed world'. This global model of development and 'modernisation', promoted by UN agencies as well as the World Bank and IMF (see Chapter Four of this thesis), underpins children in Hawassa's commitment to 'going to school to help Ethiopia'. Formal education provision in contemporary Ethiopia, as in the global North in the 19th century, is designed in order to produce and sustain a capitalist social order that operates within an open global economy (Gintis and Bowles, 1981; Katz, 1976).

The fact that children in Hawassa wanted to achieve the symbols of status seen in Chapters Four and Five not only for themselves, but to change the 'unwanted' reputation of their nation, must also be understood with reference

not only to a global economic system, but to a global history of colonialism and neo-colonialism, and associated asymmetrical structures of power. As is apparent from the quotes above, children in Hawassa were aware that people around 'all [of the] world' think of Ethiopia as a 'poor' country. This was not the way that many of the participants in this research experienced their own nation, but the immense power held by other countries and international organisations has enabled these foreign parties to depict Ethiopia in negative and distorted ways. Since the infamous famine in the 1980s, Ethiopia has often been portrayed in the Western media as a hopeless, starving nation, with little recognition of either the achievements being made by the country's people, or the political factors underpinning that unnatural disaster. Although this image may be beginning to change, as Ethiopia secures its place the 'darling' of the development community (Smith, 2014), the data discussed in this chapter demonstrate that many young participants felt that they as a country and as individuals were overshadowed by this reputation. This history of representation was thus generating children's determination to 'help' Ethiopia through their education.

7.6.2 Government ideologies and the creation of the 'imagined community' of Ethiopia

Children's commitment to going to school to 'help' and develop Ethiopia also relied on the concept of a bounded nation state, to which they had an innate allegiance. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, Anderson (1983) has analysed nation states as 'imagined communities', created through political imagination and persuasion in order to enable those in power to manage

subordinate populations. This idea of 'imagined communities' has particular resonance in postcolonial Africa, where governments are tasked – in order to maintain their political legitimacy and internal stability – with building a national identity within often relatively recently formed borders and among members of conflicting ethnic groups.

The nation state of Ethiopia is a particularly contested 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983; see Chapter Two of this thesis). Although Ethiopia was never formally colonised by European powers, the EPRDF government is faced with regional and ethnic conflicts that threaten the very existence of the disputed nation state. Building one 'imagined community' is thus essential to the party's rule. As discussed in Chapter Four, the EPRDF government came to power after overthrowing the communist Derg regime in 1991. The party represents a coalition of ethno-nationalist movements led by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front [TPLF]. The party's military victory resulted from the mobilisation of ethno-regional groups around the country against the brutal, centralised rule of the Derg, and in overthrowing the communist regime, the coalition sought to reconstitute the nation state of Ethiopia from one dominated by one ethnic group or political party to a 'voluntary federation' of the over-80 ethnic groups in the country (Abbink, 2011: 597). As well as stemming from the secessionist politics that had gained popularity during the communist era, this new federal model was also essential in enabling the EPRDF – a party primarily rooted in one small ethno-regional minority – to rule such a large, diverse country.

The nation state of Ethiopia, then, was born again as a federation of ethnic 'nations'. Unlike in other African nations, where ethnicity often provides a subtext to politics but is not formally recognised, ethnicity in Ethiopia is a 'formal political element' (Abbink, 2011: 597). All ethnic groups have the constitutional right to self-government and secession, and policy and fiscal decision-making is officially decentralised to nine ethnically based administrative regions and two self-governing city administrations. However, this accommodationist policy has not been entirely successful. Firstly, now that territories must be 'owned' by one ethnic group, and groups must therefore compete for money and power, border disputes have arisen where more than one group has claims to ownership of a geographical area (Abbink, 2011: 604; Debelo, 1998). Hawassa, the city where this research took place, is both the capital of the Sidama zone and of the larger Southern Nationals, Nationalities and Peoples' Region [SNNPR]. Many Sidamigna people resent having to share power and resources with the other peoples of this administrative region, and wish for their own autonomy. At the same time, they are also threatened by government plans to make Hawassa a self-governing city like Addis Ababa or Dire Dawa, which would mean that the city was removed from ethno-regional authority and could be ruled by people of any ethnicity or region. The government re-announced such plans during the fieldwork in 2012, and the response included violent protests and demonstrations. Similar protests in 2002 had resulted in at least 17 civilians being killed by the armed forces (Human Rights Watch, 2003). To date, the plans are on hold once more. Secondly, critics argue that the EPRDF's embracing of diversity has remained largely in the

cultural realm, with less real accommodation in the political arena (Abbay, 2004; Abbink, 2011). The decentralisation of decision-making power has been minimal, and secession is near impossible for most ethnic groups (Abbay, 2004: 608). In the last decade in particular, local and 'political' concerns have been subordinated to top-down, economic growth policies being pursued by the federal government (Abbink, 2011; Debelo, 1998). This quashing of regional autonomy is not inadvertent, but rather an indicator of the government's fear of opposition and dissent since the contested 2005 elections and their violent and repressive aftermath (Abbink, 2011; Smith, 2007).

A number of general elections had been held in Ethiopia since the defeat of the Derg in 1991, but the 2005 elections were expected to represent a move towards real democracy for the country. In prior elections opposition parties had refused participate on the basis of corruption and foul play, or had been too fragmented to effect real change (Smith, 2007). In contrast, in the run up to the May 2005 elections, there was relatively open debate between the EPRDF and opposition parties, and opposition groups were permitted to campaign more freely. The opposition in this election came largely from the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces [UEDF], a coalition of ethno-regional groups based largely in the rural South and West of the country and the diaspora, and from the Coalition for Unity and Democracy [CUD], an alliance of four parties from the professional classes in the central, Western and Northern cities, who were particularly opposed to the federal model of governance and called for a national, pan-regionalist agenda (Abbink, 2006: 182). Registration and voter

turnout for the elections were very high, and both Ethiopian people and the international community felt that real change was possible (Abbink, 2006; Smith, 2007). However, the elections ended in dispute, controversy and violence. Although the opposition parties achieved significant gains in many constituencies, they challenged the official results and claimed that they had been deprived of victory by vote rigging and miscounting. When the EPRDF refused the opposition's demands for re-elections in certain constituencies, protests and violence erupted around the country, to be met with even more violence from the armed forces. Re-elections were eventually conducted in some regions, but these were blighted by the disappearance of ballot boxes and intimidation of voters, and were not open to independent observers such as the EU. The results afforded the EPRDF more seats. After Prime Minister Zenawi returned to his seat, the outgoing government instated laws to minimise the impact of opposition MPs in parliament, for example requiring 51% rather than 20% of Members to support an initiative before it appeared on the agenda, and also established a ban on all public demonstrations (Abbink, 2006: 185). During this period many journalists who had challenged the EPRDF were arrested, and elected opponents were harassed, arrested and even killed. Protesters, including students who were the first to defy the ban on demonstrations, taxi drivers, schoolchildren and youths were also detained, arrested, 'carried away in army trucks' and shot dead (Abbink, 2006: 186). Many international organisations drew attention to the human rights abuses that occurred during this crackdown, and commentators are also in wide agreement that this was a huge opportunity lost in terms of the potential for real democracy and popular

participation, as well as for the legitimacy of the EPRDF's rule (Abbink, 2006; Smith, 2007). In the decade since the 2005 elections, the government have continued to imprison their critics, and, furthermore, have sought to minimise the potential for civil organisation and political debate, outlawing NGOs with international connections' engagement in human rights and advocacy activities and introducing 'development' programs that resettle rural communities with the effect of disrupting potential political organisation (Abbink, 2006: 179). The 2010 and 2015 elections were not surrounded by such dramatic upheaval as in 2005, but in the lead up to both the EPRDF put much effort into controlling and silencing critical voices (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Mosley, 2015). A recent article declared the 2015 elections in Ethiopia to be an 'exercise in controlled political participation', and to have little to do with true democracy (Mosley, 2015). In both elections the EPRDF achieved a predictable win, although with higher proportions of the vote than anticipated.

As well as cracking down on dissenting voices, the EPRDF has utilised formal education as a key tool in the imagining, legitimising and managing of the federal nation state. As well as seeking to address the inequities in services and resources that have been sources of discord in Ethiopia's recent history (ODI, 2011: 14; Vaughn and Tronvoll, 2003), the regime has sought to address potential civil conflicts by promoting one national identity that is inclusive of but not divided by individual ethnic identities (MoE, 2009: vi; ODI, 2011: 14).

As Stephens (1995) has observed, the political persuasion or 'imaginative ideological labour' involved in establishing an imagined national community is

often particularly aimed at young people. Young people are understood ‘as representatives of the contested future and subjects of cultural policies’, and often have minds and bodies ‘at stake in debates about [...] ethnic purity, national identity, minority self-expression and self rule’ (Stephens, 1995: 23). Schools in particular provide ‘political as well as educational establishments’, where dominant ‘preferences and predispositions’ shape the environment and curriculum, and ‘some values are taken more seriously and given more prominence than others’ (Harber, 1991: 246-8). It is apparent that, as well as viewing education as the means through which to achieve economic progress, the EPRDF government has identified education as a key tool through which to promote cultural accommodation and a unified national identity and, as a consequence, to minimise ethnic conflict and political unrest (Abbay, 2004: 601; Dupuy, 2008; MoE 2009). The overall objective of the EPRDF government’s Education Sector Development Programmes has been summarised as ‘producing good citizens and nation building’ (Rose and Dyer, 2008: 60), and indeed the third ESDP III specified that:

The education system has a societal responsibility to [...]
develop attitudes for research and work and solve problems;
develop a sense of citizenship to participate in and contribute
to the development of the community and the country.

(MoE, 2005: 25).

In other words, the government understands education as crucial in embedding in young people notions of duty, obligation and responsibility to the nation

state of Ethiopia. The national curriculum in Ethiopia is therefore explicitly designed in order to shape children's political and social values. The social studies syllabus states that,

The goal of social studies is to provide all students with the knowledge & skills necessary to make informed decisions and develop accepted attitude for the public good.

(MoE, 2009: iv, sic).

Upon graduation from primary school, according to this syllabus, students are expected to 'accept their social responsibilities', 'participate actively in the democratization process of our country', 'aspire to work towards a better life' for themselves and their country, and 'promote patriotism' (MoE, 2009.: vi). These values were clearly evident in children in Hawassa's narratives about their education. The curriculum focuses to a great extent on cultural accommodation, respect for difference and conflict prevention (MoE, 2009), but the notion of 'accepted attitude[s] for the public good' reveals that 'social' and 'civic' classes mentioned so frequently by children in Hawassa in relation to their moral 'training' were also emphasising obedience, patriotism and 'what the individual needs to be like to be an acceptable member of society' rather than critical engagement with political ideologies, contemporary national politics or controversial subjects such as the control of resources (Harber, 1990: 31). An ex-employee of the Ministry of Education reported that international donors had refused to give funding assistance for the Ethiopian civic studies curriculum, on the basis of its propagandistic nature. This explicit curriculum will

have had a significant impact on the ways in which children in Hawassa understood both their school attendance and their responsibilities to the nation state of Ethiopia, and the interactions between the two.

The explicit curriculum for other subjects can also shape students' political and social values (Gerdes, 1981; Harber, 1991). In Hawassa, science teaching was shaping students' political and social values whilst bolstering nation-building and other government agendas. Students were learning about contraception and how small families were 'better' for Ethiopia and for children, and about how becoming a 'modern' farmer was a valid and beneficial career choice (in contrast to traditional farmers, who are afforded little prestige). These teachings reflect the government's 'Agricultural-Development-Led Industrialization' development strategy (MoE, 2005, 2010) and concerted efforts towards population control (TGE, 1993). Children's comments about going to school to help their country and to improve the country's global reputation clearly indicate that they have taken on many of these political priorities. The fact that many of the young participants understood their commitment to the nation state of Ethiopia as something that was indubitable and not in need of explaining is an illustration of Lukes' (1974) concept of the 'third face' of power, which was discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis. The ideology of the 'imagined community' of Ethiopia was so powerful that it was leading children in Hawassa to act in a certain way – in committing themselves to schooling and to contributing to the national cause – seemingly without thinking about it (Lukes, 1974). This is particularly striking in Ethiopia, where

ethnic identities have often superseded the Ethiopian national identity. None of the children who participated in this research said that they went to school in order to bring honour to their ethnic group, but almost all agreed that they went in order to help Ethiopia. Formal education has been key to the establishing of this new, one nation identity among young people in Hawassa.

It is also interesting to note the gender differences between girls who wanted to 'love' Ethiopia and boys who wanted to 'serve' the country (*cf.* Chapter Six, page 203). These comments suggested that children in Hawassa were preparing to fulfill their designated roles in the common imagining of the nation as a macrocosm of the conventional, gendered family unit. As Stephens has discussed, in the creation of modern nation states,

Women, as 'mothers of the nation', reproduce the substantial body of the nation, care for its future citizens and teach the common 'mother tongue', while men are the productive agents of the economic and political conditions for social reproduction. A 'brotherhood' of men is charged with defending, protecting and containing the core domestic spaces.

(Stephens, 1997: 6).

These gender norms, which were reinforced by the culture of *yilunta* discussed in Chapter Six, may well have been further encouraging both male and female

participants' commitment to Ethiopia and desire to help the country by improving its status and global reputation.

7.6.3 Socialisation within the institution of the school

The above national education strategies resulted in schools in Hawassa actively encouraging children to align themselves with national cause. Furthermore, as well as through the explicit curriculum, political socialisation was occurring through the 'hidden curriculum' of schools in Hawassa, where hierarchical power relations and the moral emphasis on passivity and conformity were 'transmitted as inevitable and unchangeable' (Harber, 1991: 249). Education in Africa has been highlighted as particularly authoritarian and bureaucratic (Harber, 1990: 32) and, as already demonstrated in this and the previous chapter of this thesis, this was indeed the case in Hawassa. Despite the presence of student councils and associated notions of participatory democracy in the private schools, attending school in Hawassa for students at all four schools involved many rules and regulations and an unerring respect for the authority of those (adults) in power. As intimated by Girum, a senior teacher at SOS private school, the 'most important skills and capabilities' that schools hoped to expand among the children under their responsibility were tolerance, respect for rules and regulations, and 'exemplary' attitudes and behaviour (Chapter Six; page 230). Furthermore, symbols and processes within schools, such as the daily flag ceremony and the prominent display of photographs of national leaders (particularly of Meles Zenawi after his death), naturalised political loyalty to the nation-state of Ethiopia (Harber, 1991; Hart, 2002). Like the explicit curriculum, these 'hidden' structures of socialisation in schools in

Hawassa fostered children's sense of national identity and commitment to the national cause, encouraging them to 'go to school to help Ethiopia'.

7.6.4 Interpersonal relationships and culture of *yilunta*

The notions of patriotism and collective identity that were being advanced in schools in Hawassa were reinforced by the culture of *yilunta* that shaped interpersonal relationships in Hawassa. As discussed earlier in this chapter, children understood their individual success and standing as both dependent on and crucial to the reputation and fate of their country as well as that of their family. This culture of reciprocity and collective commitment was constructed and reproduced through intergenerational personal relationships in Hawassa. For instance, and as the analysis in this chapter has already demonstrated, all four of the education professionals interviewed in Hawassa expressed strongly the idea that education was to help Ethiopia as well as individual children, and they will have communicated this idea to the children they were working with. Although the children who took part in formal research activities were not observed at home or with their families, the parents that I did interact with in Hawassa were similarly committed to their children's role in building the country's future.

However, the findings discussed in this chapter have demonstrated that the culture of *yilunta* was not omnipotent in Hawassa in relation to national commitment and identity. Many children related the fate of their nation to their own personal well-being and opportunities, and seemed to have internalised norms of self-improvement and individualism, rather than these more collective

ideals. Such a perspective reflects the influence of the individualism that has been highlighted as being promoted across the Global South through neoliberal policies of self-development, competition and self-actualisation (see Morrow, 2013). Children's repeating of 'the development of the country, the development of the people' refrain also echoed the orthodox, economic accounts of the developmental benefits of education that assume that national growth will 'trickle down' into increases in wealth for people on the ground. These conflicting narratives are illustrative of both the fact that 'culture' is not unchanging, and that children's behaviours and understandings were shaped by multiple generative mechanisms that interacted with their ultimate moral concerns, and were not simply the pre-determined product of normativity and construction.

7.6.5 Children's negotiation of nationalist discourses

Whilst taking into account the above generative mechanisms encouraging children in Hawassa to be dedicated to the imagined community of Ethiopia, then, it is important to be mindful of the fact that 'children are not empty vessels, waiting to be filled with adult values, but rather active, creative participants in society' (Stephens, 1995: 23; see also Staeheli and Hammett, 2010). Jason Hart has discussed the ways in which 'nationalisms seek to involve the young and elicit loyalty and conformity' but at the same time young people 'reinterpret and rework' concepts of nationhood and belonging and perform a range of different identities in different situations, while their experiences and ideas 'question the vaunted coherence of nationalist projects themselves' (Hart, 2002: 6, 42-3). Some of the young participants in this research in Hawassa were

drawing on alternative discourses and resources to question the nationalist messages being promoted in their schools and in wider Ethiopian society. Despite their strong national loyalties, for instance, some children had a critical awareness of the shortcomings of their country. Many, although proud of their cultural heritage and sense of kinship and belonging, were at the same time comparing Ethiopia unfavourably with other nations, predominantly economically but sometimes politically. Two girls at CC2, for example, reported that they wanted their education 'to make Ethiopia one of the richest countries', and 'equal with the USA in all respects'. In particular, children resented their 'dependence' on the Western world and – as indicated above – repeatedly asserted that they wanted Ethiopia to become economically and politically independent.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, some children in Hawassa did also express a conflict or tension between the needs of themselves as individuals and the needs of the nation. Some grade eight students at SOS school, for instance, debated amongst themselves whether an intelligent and well-educated Ethiopian should leave the country to go and get a prestigious, well-paid job in America, or whether he or she should stay 'at home'. These grade eight pupils were not part of the formal research sample, nor did they engage in any of the focus groups, conferences or interviews. Their teacher had asked me to hold a session where they could ask me any questions they wanted, in order to practice their English, and this question was one of the many moral dilemmas that the children in this session expected me to give a pronouncement on (!). It

demonstrated these children's awareness of the decisions about identity, obligation and responsibility that they – as privileged young people – might have to make as they entered adulthood in Hawassa.

Although young people were accepting the ideologies of responsibility and citizenship transmitted at school, then, they were not doing this entirely uncritically. Other avenues of thought or ways of being might not be discussed at school, but freely and widely available globalised media meant that children had access to representations of different political and economic contexts. International satellite television and the internet were exposing children to ideas about alternative ways of life. Children's desire for Ethiopia to be a rich country in terms of wealth and opportunities likewise did not exist in a vacuum, but often stemmed from these media images of 'ideal childhoods' – and adulthoods - that can 'sharpen the experience of material poverty as inner deprivation' (Stephens, 1995: 20). This was evident when in the second child conference girls said that they wanted 'to make Ethiopia one of the richest countries', or 'to be equal with the USA in all respects', as well as when girls at the first child conference said that education was important 'because we want our country to be as the developed countries'. As discussed in Chapter Five, many young people in Hawassa aspired to the imagined or 'reinvented' ideals of 'Western' freedom and prosperity that they saw in televised films and music videos (De Boeck and Honwana, 2005). The classic literature on this has talked about a 'revolution of rising aspirations', and has pointed to the likelihood of political unrest and uprising if the aspirations of the poor are not fulfilled.

Davies (1962: 6), for instance, asserted that 'revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal', because the poor gain both an awareness of the rich's improvement in living standards, and a sense that escaping their current conditions is possible. Applying this 'relative' conception of income aspirations to an increasingly global world, theorists of 'the revolution of rising aspirations' predicted that

[...] the people of the developing societies, made for the first time vividly aware of the high standard of living prevailing in industrialized societies [...], would aspire to attain these standards, if not today, then tomorrow at the latest.

(Fuchs and Landsberger, 1973: 213).

In particular, theorists emphasised the role of 'newly accessible' global media forms in raising the horizons and aspirations of people living in the poorest parts of the world (Fuchs and Landsberger, 1973: 213). Such media channels pose a direct threat to the Ethiopian government by raising awareness of alternative ways of being. The party are also greatly fearful of the threat of dissident voices within the country and in the Ethiopian diaspora, and have sought to maintain high levels of control over critical voices. In 2014, security forces recently arrested six bloggers and one journalist who had spoken out against government policies (Al Jazeera, 2014). It is reported that 49 journalists had to flee from Ethiopia between 2007 and 2012 in order to escape punishment, and many more are serving custodial charges on the basis of

terrorism (Al Jazeera, 2014).

These complexities indicate young people's negotiation and reshaping of the national identities presented to them (Hart, 2002; Stephens, 1997). Although on the whole the children who took part in this research did identify with the government's nationalist project, they did not do this unquestioningly. This is despite the fact that their education does not often encourage critical engagement with politics, or questioning of the status quo. The findings from this research in Hawassa therefore support a key argument that has been made by childhood researchers in recent decades; that children have a capacity and aptitude for critical thought and for evaluating the world that they live in, even when this capacity is not expected or encouraged by adults (Boyden, 2009; James and James, 2004; Prout, 2005; Wyness, 2000). Children are not simply products of their environment. Nationalist government discourses and social norms influence children's understandings, and consequently act as generative mechanisms in shaping their behaviour, but are not inexorable structures of causation. Instead, they operate in an open system, and compete with other external generative mechanisms or 'counter-tendencies', and with children's ultimate, moral concerns (Archer, 2000; Tao, 2013).

7.7 Do these narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa was expanding children's valued capabilities?

As with the other motives for going to school discussed in this thesis, it is important to consider whether children's desire to go to school to develop or to 'help' Ethiopia suggested that education was expanding their freedoms and well-being. Given the significant harm that ethnic divisions and civil conflict

have caused in Ethiopia's recent history, an education system that promotes peace and cohesion must be commended. The findings discussed in this chapter have shown that children as well as the government had faith that their education would be effective in building national peace. The daily flag ceremony in which students came together as one to sing the national anthem was clearly an important part of the school day for many participants, with seven children mentioning it in the 'diaries' in which they described a normal day at school. Grade five students at Adare said that this ceremony was one of the things that they liked most about going to school, and children of all ages in Hawassa would spend hours colouring in their nation's flag. These observations uphold other research in Ethiopia, which has found children to value the Ethiopian flag and describe it as a symbol of belonging (Tekola *et al.*, 2009).

On the basis of observed interactions in the four schools, moreover, it would seem that education in Hawassa was in some ways fostering peace and social cohesion. Students of different ethnic and religious backgrounds attended school in harmony, in stark contrast to the ethnic divisions that simmer underneath – and sometimes come to boil over in – 'adult' public life in the city. Furthermore, most young people I encountered were very proud of their Ethiopian identity. As well as wanting to change the view of Ethiopia held by people around the world to a more positive one, some young people articulated the ways in which their way of life in Ethiopia was superior to those lived in Western societies. A common view expressed in everyday interactions with children and adults in Hawassa was that in England (and elsewhere in the Global

North) we had 'no social life'; we had no sense of community, all we did was work, and when we died no one would come to our funeral! Although some children talked of their aspirations to the prosperity and freedom that they saw represented in idealised depictions of Europe and Northern America, this was almost always countered with notions of what Ethiopia had got right and others had got wrong.

As well as this positive, unifying utility of education, the data discussed in this chapter have revealed yet more ways in which the young people who participated in this research experienced going to school as empowering them to live the lives that they valued. It has demonstrated that many of the valued capabilities that children expected to be expanded by their education have been identified by human capabilities theorists of education as of import and value. As discussed throughout this thesis, the capabilities approach is also important because of its emphasis on young people's capacity to determine their own life course and to live a life that *they* have reason to value (Sen, 1999: 87; see also Biggeri *et al.*, 2006; Walker, 2006). On this basis, the fact that participants in Hawassa valued being able to provide for their local and national community, to participate in political decision-making and the nation-building project, to live in a peaceful, democratic society and to share their knowledge in order to help others mean that these are important functions for education to fulfill.

However, it is important be mindful at this point of the fallibility of children's knowledge (Sayer, 2000). It is insufficient to consider whether children *believed*

that their education was expanding their political capabilities. Asking which capabilities education in Hawassa was actually serving to expand among children, and why, is an important avenue for research. This study did not gather empirical data on the particular capabilities that going to school expanded for individual children in Hawassa. However, although the Ethiopia government are officially seeking to promote participation and cooperation through the education system, observations in Hawassa did indicate that schooling, and particularly the exam-based syllabus, was on the whole emphasising norms of competition and individual success rather than solidarity and peace (see Davies, 2006). Furthermore, the harsh contrasts in quality between public and private schools discussed in Chapter Five were reinforcing economic inequality and enhancing the divide between rich and poor that undermines social cohesion and thus potentially contributes to conflict (Davies, 2006: 1029; Staeheli and Hammett, 2010: 677)

Although education has the potential to foster peace, cooperation and solidarity, then, this transformative effect is not inherent to all forms of schooling. As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, capabilities theorists have argued that though education *can* enable citizens to engage in political decision-making, participate in public debate, think critically about their social surroundings and engage with political propaganda, it is only a certain type of education that will expand such capabilities (Nussbaum, 2006; Walker, 2006). Nussbaum has rightly pointed out that:

Through primary and secondary education, young citizens

form, at a crucial age, habits of mind that will be with them all through their lives. They learn to ask questions or not to ask them; to take what they hear at face value or to probe more deeply; to imagine the situation of a person different from themselves or to see a new person as a mere threat to the success of their own projects; to think of themselves as members of a homogenous group or as members of a nation, and a world.

(Nussbaum, 2006: 387).

In schools in Hawassa, children were forming ‘habits of mind’ that were not conducive to development in the form of democracy and freedom. Although the government were promoting the notion of ‘child-centred’ and participatory learning, rote learning remained the norm and – as discussed in Chapter Four – both the government and schools were in practice emphasising the internalisation of scientific information and practical skills rather than critical thinking (MoE, 2010). This limitation of learning is not accidental. As Nussbaum has argued, ‘many politicians the world over do not like educational freedom [but instead] seek the imprisonment of children within a single ‘correct’ ideology’ (Nussbaum, 2006: 392). There is a stark lack of freedom of speech in Ethiopia (Abbay, 2004; Al Jazeera, 2014; Ethiopian Human Rights Council, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2014; Smith, 2014). It was in this context that children were not being taught about political alternatives, not being taught to think critically about their lives and not being taught to engage mindfully with

propaganda. It is along these lines that my conclusions diverge from the narratives of my participants, who experienced their schooling as empowering. Although I would agree that the four schools in Hawassa were doing well in promoting a national identity that encouraged social cohesion and addressed ethnic conflict, the official and hidden curricula in these schools were inhibiting rather than expanding schoolchildren in Hawassa's capacity for critical thought and political engagement. Although the UNCRC asserts that every child has a right to a name and a nationality (UN, 1989), I agree with Pamela Stephens that children should also have

[...] rights not to be constrained within bounded and exclusionary national identities and not to have their minds and bodies appropriated as the unprotected terrain upon which battles are fought about the nature, range and future of nations and national identities.

(Stephens, 1997: 10).

The education system in Ethiopia therefore needs to be understood as contributing to a narrow definition of political 'development', which upholds the status quo, quashes dissidence and legitimises unequal power relations.

7.8 Conclusion

The first question (Q1) addressed by this research asked

*What reasons do children in Hawassa give for going to school,
and what do they expect to gain from their education?*

The findings discussed in this chapter have demonstrated the ways in which, as well as enabling them to command a better life for themselves and their families, participants in this research felt that going to school enabled them to contribute to the future of their nation. These children in Hawassa believed that their education would benefit Ethiopia by enabling them to get jobs that would contribute to the economy and to the development of infrastructure and public services, and by instilling in them the knowledge and skills needed to lead the country politically. Many were also concerned that their participation in education – and their improved job prospects – would enable them to improve the way in which people around the world viewed Ethiopia. Some children recognised that national progress could expand the opportunities available to them themselves as individuals, but many also expressed commitment to a national identity and cause bigger than themselves.

The second research question (Q2) addressed by this research asked

*To what extent are these reasons for going to school
consistent or in contention with dominant policy discourses
about the purposes and value of education?*

The analysis in this chapter has therefore considered the extent to which children in Hawassa's narratives about going to school to 'help' Ethiopia were in line with, added to or challenged currently dominant arguments for children's educational participation in this context and elsewhere. This analysis has revealed that children's narratives about going to school to 'help' Ethiopia corroborated to some extent human capital evaluations of education, with

children understanding education as endowing them with the skills needed to foster the economic advancement of their nation. However, these children also believed that education was and should be expanding opportunities and functionings available to them and their compatriots that went beyond their capacity to contribute to national economic progress. The valued capabilities that children in Hawassa expected to result from their schooling included being able to support their local and national community financially as a result of their expanded employability, but also to share their knowledge with others, to solve problems, to engage with politics, to build peace and to 'lead' and bring honour to Ethiopia. In this sense, their reasons for going to school were more sufficiently accounted for by the human capabilities approach, which accounts for the positive functions of schooling beyond those relating to economics. However, the focus of Sen's original capabilities approach on individuals' capability sets neglects the commitment that many of the children who took part in this research expressed to the development of their country, beyond the benefits it offered them as individuals. Listening to children has illustrated that the expansion of collective capabilities and well-being (cf. Carpenter, 2009; Evans, 2002; Ibrahim, 2006) is an equally important reason that children in developing contexts such as this should go to school.

The third question (Q3) addressed by this research asked

What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements shape children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?

The analysis in this chapter has considered the ways in which children's moral concerns interacted with external generative mechanisms with the result of encouraging them to go to school in order to contribute to the development of their country. The findings discussed in this chapter have clearly demonstrated that the ways that schoolchildren in Hawassa understood and explained their schooling did not sit completely with the rational, self-interested individual that is often imagined in economic accounts of why children go to school. Children's sense of collectivity and commitment to collective well-being can be understood as an ultimate, human concern that was motivating them to go to school. At the same time, though, nation states are not natural phenomena, but socially constructed. The analysis in this chapter has therefore examined the generative mechanisms upholding children in Hawassa's dedication to the nation state of Ethiopia. It has shown that the EPRDF government has identified the school as a key arena in which to produce productive and committed citizens, and has therefore designed national education policy and curricula in order to instill ideas of nationalism, citizenship and responsibility in children who have little say in the designing of such strategies. Both the explicit and hidden curricula in schools in Hawassa were encouraging children to understand their education as for the benefit of their country as well as themselves, their families and their local and/or ethnic communities. Parents and teachers were also encouraging children to strive to 'help' Ethiopia, as was the powerful culture of *yilunta*. As well as in current government strategies, this culture of collective honour and responsibility is rooted in the history of the imagined community of Ethiopia, which has been shaped by global power relations. These

cultural and discursive mechanisms were all interacting with institutional provision and with children's ultimate concerns with the result of encouraging children in Hawassa to go to school in order to 'help' Ethiopia.

Despite the power of such discursive generative mechanisms, the findings discussed in this chapter are indicative of the fact that the social world is an open, rather than closed system (Bhaskar, 1978, 2008). As well as official discourses of nationalism and collectivism, young people were drawing on alternative discourses, particularly those made available by global media sources, to construct the lives that they wanted to achieve for themselves and/or their compatriots. These findings therefore reveal the complex nature of children's agency and decision-making in relation to their educational participation. Children's behaviours and choices were not simply the outcome of compulsion or normativity, but neither should they be understood as entirely rational or 'free' choices. Instead, they were strategies adopted within the constraints of the options and discourses available to these children at this moment in geography and history.

The final question (Q4) addressed by this thesis asked

To what extent do children's narratives indicate that going to school in Hawassa might enable them to live lives that they have reason to value?

The analysis in this chapter therefore considered the extent to which children's narratives about going to school to 'help' their country suggested that schooling

in Hawassa was expanding their individual and collective capabilities, and thus enabling them to achieve the lives that they had reason to value, or rather constraining them to a narrow, disempowering model of national development and obedient citizenship. Although many of the children who took part in this research experienced going to school as empowering, both official and hidden curricula in schools in Hawassa – determined by policies about which children have little say – were constraining children's agency and political capabilities by encouraging obedience, respect for authority and unquestioning commitment to the national cause rather than critical thought and engagement with questions about politics, social justice and alternative ways of being. The nationalist function ascribed to education in Ethiopia meant that schooling in Hawassa was not contributing to children's freedom and well-being as fully as it could be. The more radical 'emancipatory education' framework discussed in Chapters Two and Six would embrace these potential functions of education more fully and adequately.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

As demonstrated in the review of the literature in Chapter Two of this thesis, It is widely accepted in policy and development circles that children should go to school. Education is generally understood by most as a potential good that is capable of contributing to progress, advancement and 'development'. However, different conceptions of what is meant by 'development' have resulted in different roles and functions being ascribed to formal schooling. For instance, human capital economists expect education to produce an efficient workforce in order to stimulate create national, economic growth. In more recent years, mainstream development discourse has also come to include ideas of poverty reduction at individual and household levels and, accordingly, to promote the role that education can play in enabling individuals to meet their 'basic' needs. Capabilities theorists, meanwhile, have emphasised the role of education in preparing children and adults for a fully human life that includes participation, choice and freedom as well as physical health and the ability to command a sufficient income.

This thesis has contributed to these debates, which have hitherto almost exclusively taken place among adult academics, practitioners and policy makers, by including the voices and experiences of the children and young people who are supposed to benefit from education. Drawing on findings from a sustained programme of qualitative research with children attending primary schools in one Ethiopian city, it has explored the reasons that children in Hawassa gave for

going to school (Q1), and considered the extent to which these reasons were consistent with or challenged these dominant policy discourses about why children in this context and more generally should go to school (Q2).

The analysis in this thesis has also sought to examine the factors shaping children's motivations for going to school. Based on a critical realist understanding of children's agency as arising from their own 'ultimate concerns' and ideas of the good, and yet simultaneously dependent upon external generative mechanisms that operated in the material realities of their lives, in structures of power and institutional arrangements, and in their interpersonal relationships with other people, it has asked what moral concerns and external constraints and enablements were shaping children in Hawassa's understandings of their education and motivations for going to school (Q3). Following on from this recognition that the reasons that children gave for going to school were constrained by the explanations and discourses available to them, the analysis has also considered the extent to which children in Hawassa's narratives about their education indicated that going to school in Hawassa might be enabling them to live lives that they have reason to value. Drawing on ideas from the human capabilities approach and the emancipatory education literature, it has considered how far schooling in Hawassa was contributing to the expansion of individual and collective well-being and freedoms (Q4).

This concluding chapter summarises what the combination of 'listening' to children in Hawassa with critical analysis of the structures and mechanisms

shaping their understandings, motivations and actions has revealed about why children in this urban African context and more generally should and do go to school.

8.2 What reasons did children in Hawassa give for going to school?

The findings from this research in Hawassa are in line with other research in Ethiopia that has found children to value education as essential to their current and future well-being (Boyden, 2013, Camfield, 2011b, Camfield and Takere, 2009). The children who took part in this research particularly asserted future-oriented reasons for going to school that related to their becoming respected and respectable adults. The primary reason that children in Hawassa gave for going to school was that their formal education would endow them with the necessary knowledge, skills, qualifications and attitudes needed to gain employment in the future (Chapter Five). They understood 'getting a job' as the means to various valued ends, including being able to protect themselves and their families from poverty, to realise social mobility and to contribute to the Ethiopian economy.

Participants also wanted to be able to gain certain forms of professional employment in order to gain respect from others. Moreover, they understood formal education in and of itself as an indicator of and route to respectability and 'goodness'. The second reason that children in this research gave for their participation in primary education was thus that they went to school in order to 'become good people' (Chapter Six). Children believed that both the knowledge that they gained at school and the moral guidance, training and influence that

they received from their teachers and peers was making them better children in the present, and would mean that they would become good adults in the future. As well as going to school in order to be able to get jobs that would mean they would be able to provide materially for themselves and others, they asserted that went to school in order to learn about moral and social issues and to be able to share that knowledge with others, and in order to become better behaved and more disciplined. Children wanted to become 'good' people in order to bring honour and respectability to their families, as well as to gain acceptance and affection for themselves.

In addition, children in Hawassa wanted to bring honour and respect to their country. A third key reason that the young participants in this research in Hawassa gave for going to school was that they went in order to 'help Ethiopia' (Chapter Seven). Many children were concerned that their participation in education, their getting good jobs and their becoming good and moral people would improve the way in which their country was viewed by other nations and individuals around the world. Additionally, some participants asserted that their education would benefit Ethiopia by enabling them to get jobs that would contribute to the economy and to the development of infrastructure and public services, and by instilling in them the knowledge and skills needed to lead the country politically. Some children recognised that national progress could expand the economic and social opportunities available to them themselves as individuals, but many expressed a more collectivist commitment to their national community. For these children, becoming a person of worth in

contemporary, urban Ethiopia involved becoming a productive member of the national community as well as a moral and capable individual able to provide for themselves and their immediate families.

8.3 To what extent were these reasons for going to school consistent with dominant policy discourses about why children should go to school?

The reasons that the children who took part in this research gave for going to school were often in line with widely accepted beliefs about why children – in urban Ethiopia and more generally – should go to school. First, children's primary conceptualisation of formal education as an input into their future productivity as workers reflected the human capital model of education that is promoted by the World Bank and the Ethiopian government (Hanushek and Wößmann, 2007, MoE, 2010). Likewise, their narratives about going to school in order to be able to 'help' Ethiopia corroborated to some extent human capital evaluations of education, in that they were prioritising the economic advancement of their nation, and understanding education as endowing them with the skills needed to foster this 'development'.

However, although children did understand schooling as a means to achieving something else, rather than asserting education as an intrinsically valuable right or entitlement in itself, for example, this instrumentality was not limited to the narrow, economic instrumentalism of the human capital approach to education. Instead, being able to get a job was itself seen as a means to other valued ends. Children wanted to get jobs so that they could meet the basic needs of themselves and their families, realise social mobility and contribute to the social

as well as economic development of their national community. The accounts reviewed in Chapters Six and Seven, in which children asserted that they went to school in order to be transformed into good people and good citizens as well as good workers, demonstrate the inadequacy of human capital accounts of education that only consider the economic impact of children's schooling, and do not consider the other valued capabilities that education has the potential to expand. These reasons that children gave for going to school are more comprehensively accounted for by the human capabilities approach to education, which has asserted that the role of education should be to expand people's valued capabilities, including their ability to gain employment and thus to meet their material needs, but also their capacity to conduct human relationships, to care for and share their knowledge with others, to engage with politics, and to participate fully in society (Biggeri, 2007, Robeyns, 2006, Sen, 1997, Walker, 2006). However, listening to children in Hawassa has also revealed the limits of Sen's original capabilities approach, in its focus on individual capabilities and freedoms. The commitment that many of the children who took part in this research expressed to the development of their country, beyond the benefits it offered them as individuals, highlights the importance of collective capabilities and well-being (Carpenter, 2009, Evans, 2002, Ibrahim, 2006). Their narratives suggest that formal schooling can and should seek to expand collective as well as individual capabilities and freedoms, and that this type of human development is an equally important reason that children in urban Ethiopia and other contexts should go to school.

8.4 What moral concerns and external constraints and enablements were shaping children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school?

The review of existing explanations of children's school attendance in Chapter Two demonstrated the fact that this phenomenon has varyingly been explained as a consequence of compulsion, normativity and/or economic rationality, and that these explanations have predominantly neglected children as decision-makers, and disregarded the complexities of human agency. Demonstrating the futility of these explanations, the analysis in this thesis has instead sought to understand children's school attendance as an act of agency that is dependent both upon their ultimate, human concerns, and upon certain cultural, structural, relational and institutional pressures that were encouraging and discouraging educational participation in this context.

First, the analysis in this thesis has sought to reintroduce the 'moral' into the social in debates about the lives of children. It has presented children in Hawassa as moral social beings, who acted in part on the basis of instrumental rationality but who were also capable of formulating and then committing themselves to 'ultimate concerns', with the result of choosing certain paths of action (Archer, 2000, Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013). It has argued that theirs was a substantive rationality, not just an instrumental one (Weber, 2013/1921), and that this animated them in pursuit of specific courses of action in relation to their school attendance. Children's desires to go to school in order to become 'good' workers resulted from their concern to be able to provide a decent standard of living for themselves and their families, and to be productive members of society. Their motivations to go to school in order to become

‘good’ people can equally be understood as reflecting their ‘ultimate’ or moral concerns. Participants believed that going to school, in the ways discussed above, enabled them to become people that they could be proud of being; an impetus for action that stemmed from their ‘inner being’ and ‘ideas of the good’ (Alderson, 2013, Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013, Tao, 2013). Likewise, children in Hawassa’s commitment to the national cause, and to a collectivist ethic of honour and care, might be understood as a fundamental moral tendency for some children in Ethiopia, who do not subscribe to ‘Western’ individualism. As well as these inherent ideas of the good, which constitute one fundamental aspect of being human, participants’ commitment to becoming *recognised* as good workers, good people and good citizens was also an ultimate concern. This concern arose from their neediness and vulnerability; their human need to be loved, appreciated and valued, and to be provided for as well as to provide for themselves.

Although children’s ‘ultimate’ concerns underpinned their motivations for going to school, however, they are on their own insufficient in explaining why these children wanted to go to school. In order to understand why children in Hawassa wanted to participate in formal education, it is necessary to examine the generative mechanisms encouraging them to identify formal education as the route to actualising these ultimate concerns. This thesis has identified multiple external generative mechanisms that were interacting in order to lead children in Hawassa to identify participation in formal education as the key to becoming both someone who they could be proud of being, and who others

would recognise, accept and love.

These generative mechanisms on the one hand operated in the material and structural realities of children's lives in Hawassa. It was constitutionally and legally set up for children in Ethiopia to go to school, and although the findings from this research do not support the notion that children go to school simply because they are compelled to do so, it is not possible to explain children in Hawassa's school attendance, and reasons for wanting to go to school, without considering the strategies and structures that their government had employed in order to facilitate their doing so. A number of institutional and legislative structures implemented by the EPRDF and previous governments made it physically possible for children in Hawassa to go to school, for example ensuring that there were a number of schools, with teachers, within walking distance of their homes, or enabling them to combine their formal education with paid and domestic labour. These policies and structures constituted real generative mechanisms that children's motivations for going to school, and school attendance itself, presupposed. Generative mechanisms in Bhaskar's third plane of 'broader social relations and structures' that impacted upon children's aspiration formations and motivations for going to school also included the structure of the economy and the labour market in Ethiopia. In order to access the job opportunities that they desired, and indeed increasingly in order to access any employment opportunities at all, it was necessary for children in Hawassa to participate in at least some years of formal education.

Discursive as well as structural mechanisms were encouraging children in

Hawassa to want to go to school in order to actualise their ultimate concerns. The institutional and legal mechanisms that the EPRDF government had introduced with the goal of expanding the reach of formal education had not only made it physically easier for children in Hawassa to go to school, but had reconstituted Ethiopian society so that a 'normal' childhood was expected to involve attending school and working diligently to become a good and productive individual and citizen. This imagining of what constitutes a 'good' childhood and therefore a 'good' Ethiopian child is in line with the specific idea of childhood as a time for school and play, and therefore not for work, that was exported by Western colonialists in the twentieth century and now dominates thinking about children and childhood across the world. As well as in official government discourses promoting the school as the correct arena for childhoods, this message was promoted by NGOs and foreign agencies in Ethiopia. It also appeared to be being reinforced in children's interpersonal relationships with the adults in their lives, including their teachers and parents and other members of their community who would 'pressure' them to go to school. The children who took part in this research in Hawassa wanted to see themselves and to be seen by others as good and moral children. Being at school had become a key indicator of goodness and morality in their society, and this encouraged them to go to school in order to achieve this ultimate goal.

As well as these norms about what it meant to be a good child, children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school were shaped by norms about what it meant to be a good adult. First, children's aspirations to certain forms of

professional employment were rooted in both locally specific and more global notions of respectability. Second, children's commitment to going to school and working hard in order to be able to provide for themselves and their families presupposed neoliberal ideas of meritocracy and individual responsibility. Third, the EPRDF government had identified the school as a key arena in which to produce committed and obedient citizens, as well as productive workers. National education policy and curricula had been designed in order to instill ideas of nationalism, citizenship and responsibility in children, and participants' explanations of their educational participation relied upon these normative social scripts. As well as in current government strategies, notions of collective honour and responsibility had roots in the contested history of the 'imagined' community of Ethiopia, and in a colonial and post-colonial history in which the West has held the power to define Ethiopia and Ethiopian people as poor and wanting. They were also reinforced by the culture of *yilunta*, which led children in Hawassa to feel a commitment to preserving the honour and respectability of their families and communities – including the national community – as well as of themselves as individuals. This culture of *yilunta* shaped children's social relations with others, and with adults in particular, and both teachers and parents in Hawassa were encouraging children to go to school in order to 'help', 'develop' and bring honour to Ethiopia.

These generative mechanisms operated in an open system, and did not independently determine children's behaviour. As well as official discourses of nationalism and collectivism, for example, young people were drawing on

alternative discourses, particularly in the global media, to construct the lives that they wanted for themselves and/or their compatriots. There also seemed to be some conflict between the individualistic notions of responsibility and success being promoted in schools as part of the EPRDF's neoliberal development agenda, and the collectivist culture of *yilunta* that encouraged children to subordinate their own needs and desires to the good of their families and local and national communities. Furthermore, for many children the choice to go to school was an active one that went beyond normatively constituted behaviour. Some of the children who took part in this research reported barriers to their educational participation that they had had to overcome, including domestic responsibilities and the temptations of other lifestyles including going to work and living on the street, and not all families in Hawassa encouraged children to go to school all of the time.

The findings from this research, then, have demonstrated that children in Hawassa's commitment to going to school did not result from purely rational assessments of the potential economic rewards to be gained from their participation in formal education. However, nor was children's school attendance the pre-determined result of social construction and normativity. Instead, the analysis in this thesis has demonstrated that the children who took part in this research wanted to participate in formal education because they cared about becoming valuable and valued members of society, and because the structures and discourses available to them at this point in geography and history were encouraging them to identify formal education as the means

through which to achieve their objectives of becoming good workers, good people and good citizens of Ethiopia. Children were actively choosing education as the means through which to fulfill their aspirations for better ways of living than they and their parents were currently experiencing, and to achieve indicators of social adulthood that would earn them acceptance, care and affection. Children's values, motivations and courses of action with regard to their school attendance therefore need to be understood 'in the context of capability, vulnerability and precarious well-being or flourishing, and [their] tendency to form attachments and commitments', and in the light of broad, social, economic and political structures (Sayer, 2011: 6). They should not be divorced from the 'adult' world of politics, economics and culture, but understood as shaped by and shaping these social forces.

8.5 To what extent did children's narratives indicate that school education in Hawassa might be enabling them to live lives that they had reason to value?

On the basis of the important individual and collective capabilities discussed above, it is important to recognise that listening to children in Hawassa illuminated positive functions of education that are not always accounted for in development and policy literature, which tends to focus on the economic benefits of schooling. Children's desires to go to school in order to be able to gain employment, earn a living and thus provide for themselves and those around them, to become good and moral people and to be able to help their local and national communities were important and creditable. Many of the children who took part in this research experienced going to school as

empowering in multiple ways, expecting it to enable them to provide for themselves and their families (Chapter Five), to avoid harmful practices and command equal gender rights (Chapter Six) and to participate in politics and 'lead' their country (Chapter Seven), to take just a few examples. Schooling in Hawassa did in particular appear to be challenging some harmful traditional gender norms and practices, and to be fostering peace and cooperation among children of different ethnic groups.

However, by preparing students to take up low-ranking positions in the capitalist economy, schools were also reinforcing power inequalities between nation states, between generations, and between rich and poor. Furthermore, children in Hawassa were imagining futures for themselves and their nation that were unlikely to be achievable. In subscribing to the neoliberal idea that they could have 'everything' that they wanted if they just worked hard enough, children were overlooking the external conversion factors and structural counter-tendencies that might constrain their ability to achieve these aims. At present, both the education system in Hawassa and the national and global economic situation mean that many children will not achieve the prosperous, urban futures that they imagine for themselves and their fellow Ethiopians. The consequences of these unfulfilled aspirations remain to be seen for the children who took part in this research, but could include widespread political unrest directed at the government and global system that fail to fulfill their promises of inclusion and prosperity, and/or an internalisation of failure and blame among another generation who are unable to live lives that they have reason to value.

The Ethiopian government has a vested interest in ensuring that it not political dissent and unrest that arises as a result of children's unfulfilled aspirations. It is well documented that education is never neutral, but serves to produce a certain kind of citizen (Gintis and Bowles, 1981, Harber, 1991, Staeheli and Hammett, 2010), and participants' narratives about why they went to school suggested that, through both hidden and explicit curricula, education in Hawassa was socialising children into norms of obedience, deference to authority and loyalty to the national cause rather than fostering independence, critical thought and engagement with questions about politics, social justice and alternative ways of being. In the highly undemocratic political context of urban Ethiopia, education was discouraging critical engagement with the causes of the gaps between children's expectations and reality, and thus serving well the current political elites, but less well the best interests of schoolchildren themselves. In this way, it was acting as a form of social control rather than a source of human development and freedom.

8.6 Wider implications of this research

The findings from this research demonstrate that children from as young as six years old are capable of contributing to important public discussions about policies and interventions that affect their lives on a daily basis. The children who participated in this research in Hawassa had clear ideas about why they went to school and about what they wanted their education to achieve, and their explanations of their participation in formal education challenged the

overly economic and individualist understandings that tend to dominate policy conversations, and indeed interventions.

However, the analysis in this thesis has also demonstrated the importance of recognising that children, like adults, can be mistaken. Some of the outcomes that children in Hawassa expected to arise from their education are unlikely to transpire. This fallibility of children's expectations in relation to their education and employment outcomes reveals the fact that children were not simply attending school as a result of a rational assessment of the economic benefits to be accrued from education as opposed to other activities. The findings from this case study therefore discredit this economic model of human agency. However, children in Hawassa were not simply attending school because it was seen as the 'right' or 'normal' thing to do. This thesis has thus also refuted the theory of normativity that suggests that children go to school because they are the site of social construction. It has demonstrated the value of a critical realist understanding of human agency that understands human motivations and behaviours as being dependent upon people's ultimate, human concerns, and upon external generative mechanisms. The motivations that children who took part in this research in Hawassa expressed for going to school arose from their ultimate concerns as human beings, who wanted to meet their own basic needs, to be loved and accepted by others, and to contribute to the community that they were part of. Research that recognises that people act in certain ways because they care about things, and out of vulnerability and neediness as well as autonomy and competence enables greater understanding of not only how

people act, but why they would want to do so. Children in Hawassa's motivations for going to school were also shaped by external generative mechanisms that operated in their interpersonal relations with others, in the material and structural realities that shaped their daily lives and in local and international normative discourses. Children's motivations and actions can not be divorced from, or understood without reference to, the 'adult' world of economics, politics and culture. Research must do more to reconcile these two worlds, which have been falsely separated.

This case study of primary education in Hawassa also demonstrates the importance of the critical realist recognition that human beings can hold problematic understandings about what is good for them. The human capabilities concept of adaptive preferences enables research to consider whether the outcomes that people desire for them are in their true interests. Some of the functions of education that children in Hawassa presented in a positive light can in fact be understood as detrimental to their well-being and freedom. The final implication of this research is thus to highlight the importance of listening to children and taking them seriously, but also to draw attention to the danger of overprivileging children's voices. An important future avenue for research is to explore what capabilities and freedoms education truly is expanding in different contexts.

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Appendix 1

First point of contact with school directors.

28th August 2012

Dear Director/Head teacher,

I am writing to ask for your cooperation with my PhD research here in Hawassa. My PhD, based at the University of Warwick, UK, is interested in children's experiences of primary education in Ethiopia. This will contribute to a wider understanding of the importance of schooling in sub-Saharan Africa. With your permission, I would like to conduct some research sessions with the children of your school between now and December. The questions I will be asking include;

- Do children want to go to school, why?
- What does school lead to in the future?
- Do other activities, such as paid or domestic labour, compete with schooling?
- Who makes decisions about children's attendance?
- What factors encourage and discourage attendance?
- Do children make decisions about what happens to them at school?
- What capabilities do children gain from attending school?

My thesis will be based upon my findings gathered from government and private schools in Hawassa. It will be read by my PhD supervisors and examiners, and I will also be presenting my conclusions at conferences within the UK academic community. I hope to publish journal articles too. I would also be happy to provide you, your teachers and the students with a report of my findings from your school and others. I believe that your school could benefit from participating in this research, which will empower children to talk about their experiences, and encourage them to consider the role of education in their own life.

I have an Amharic interpreter available to me, so all that I would need from you is some time with the children. I hope we could discuss how this could be most conveniently arranged.

Many thanks for your time.
Yours truly,

Lydia Marshall
PhD candidate, University of Warwick

Appendix 2

*Example topic guide for individual interview with Alamudin, aged 14.
(n.b. some questions were based on what groups and / or individuals had said in focus groups sessions, and so topic guides varied).*

Thank you so much for helping me with my research. We've talked in groups about our experiences of going to school, and now I'd like to ask you some questions on your own. Is that ok? Are you happy for me to record our conversation, so that I can remember what we've said?

How old are you?

I'd like you to tell me about your home. Who do you live with?
Caregiver occupation, ages of siblings, sibling occupation?

How long does it take you to get to school each day?

Do you remember when you started going to school?

How old were you?

Who decided you should go to school?

Have you always attended Union Academy?

If not, which other schools attended? For how long have you attended this school?

Now I would like to explore some of the things we talked about in our group session. In the first session we talked about the reasons children go to school. Your group said that children go to school "to be the best man". Can you tell me what this means?

The group also said that going to school makes us more aware.

Do you agree with that?

What kind of thing have you gained awareness of at school?

The second time we met we talked about the differences between children who do and don't go to school. The group decided that children who go to school can develop their country.

Do you agree?

How does going to school enable them to do this?

In the next session, we talked about what your perfect school would be like. Is there anything you would change about this school to make it more perfect?

We also talked about who makes different decisions about children's school life. There was quite a lot of disagreement about who makes different decisions. I have made another chart for you to fill in on your own, if you like?

(printed on separate sheet)

	Me	Family	Teachers	Director	Government	?
Will I go to school?						
What will I learn?						
How will I learn?						
When will I stop going to school?						
What will I do at break time?						

Who do you think makes these decisions?

You, your family, your teachers, your director, the government, anybody else?

What do they think about when they decide these things?

Probe feelings about who gets to make decisions, who should, if they can make decisions for themselves.

In our final group session last week, you all had a go at interviewing each other.

How did you find it?

Did you enjoy it?

Why?

I was interested when you asked Kaleb about the environment around his school. Do you like the environment around Union Academy?

Is that important to you?

Why?

In your interview with Kaleb you said that you wanted to be a doctor.

Is that right?

Do you think this will happen? Will you become a doctor?

If yes, How will school prepare you for this job?

I have a couple more things to talk about, which we didn't discuss in the group sessions. Is that ok?

Do you think going to school makes your life better?

If yes, In what way?

Is there anything in your life that makes it hard for you to go to school?

If yes, probe on what, how, why

As I have told you, when I go back to England I will be writing a book about what children in Hawassa have told me about what it's like to go to school here.

Would you like your name to be in that book, or would you prefer it to stay secret?

Are you happy if I show other people the videos that we have made together?

Is it ok to have photos of you in the book?

Is there anything else you think I should write in the book, that we haven't already talked about?

Thank you so much for helping me with my research, your answers have been really helpful. I will be coming back next year to tell you how I am getting on with my writing. Then you will have the chance to tell me if I am saying anything wrong!

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you again for taking part, and if you think of any more questions or things you think I should know, here is my email address and my address in England.

You can ask your teacher to help you write to me if you want to.

n.b. consent for use of names and images was checked again at the child conferences, 5 months later.

Appendix 3

Preliminary conclusions presented to children who attended the child conferences.

Going to school to get a job

- ⇒ We go to school to get a job in the future
- ⇒ Children who don't go to school will have problems because they are unable to get a good job, or any job at all
- ⇒ Children who don't go to school might become shoe shiners, servants, traditional farmers, slaves, domestic assistants, thieves, beggars, addicts, murderers
- ⇒ We want to become doctors, teachers, philosophers, scientists, engineers, pilots...
- ⇒ Children who go to school can do these jobs
- ⇒ We study different subjects at school that help us to get the jobs we want
- ⇒ Our teachers give us advice and encouragement
- ⇒ Getting a job would make us proud of ourselves, and mean that we had a good life
- ⇒ Getting a job would mean that we can support our family
- ⇒ Getting a job would mean that we can help our country

Going to school to become a good person

- ⇒ Going to school shapes and improves our behaviour
- ⇒ We go to school to change ourselves, and to be the “best man”
- ⇒ Going to school means that we can have a good marriage
- ⇒ Going to school means that we will know how to lead our family in the future
- ⇒ Children who go to school have good personal hygiene
- ⇒ Children who go to school care about their future life
- ⇒ Children who go to school are happy
- ⇒ Going to school means we have lots of friends
- ⇒ Going to school protects us from alcohol, drugs and addiction
- ⇒ It is important that we love our school
- ⇒ Rules, regulations and respect are very important at school
- ⇒ We don’t like it when other students behave badly and disturb our classes

Going to school to help Ethiopia

- ⇒ We go to school to develop, or help, Ethiopia
- ⇒ Going to school means that we can help poor, sick and orphaned people
- ⇒ Getting a good job will help our country
- ⇒ For example, children who go to school might become doctors who can help sick people
- ⇒ Getting a good job means that we will earn money to help Ethiopia
- ⇒ Children who go to school can lead their country
- ⇒ When people are uneducated, or don't have knowledge, they can't help their country
- ⇒ We can teach our families and neighbours about the things we learn at school
- ⇒ We like learning about our country at school
- ⇒ Going to school means we can bring honour and respect to Ethiopia

Appendix 4

Topic guide for interviews with education professionals.

First of all I really want to thank you for allowing me to conduct my research at your school. Your students have been great to work with, and have shared some really interesting opinions and experiences about going to school. I would also like to talk to you about your opinions and experiences; if you're willing?

Are you happy for me to record this conversation?

And before we go any further, would you like your school be named in my research, or would you prefer it to remain anonymous? I would like to be able to credit you in the dissemination of my research, as you have been so helpful, but understand if you don't want the school to be identifiable. This dissemination will include my written thesis, as well as conference presentations or discussions I might attend and journal articles I might write.

And would you like to be named yourself, or to remain anonymous?

Ok, so let's get started. What is your official job title?

How long have you been in this job at this school?

Explore academic and employment history

Why did you become a (*job title*)?

Ok now I'd like to confirm some details about your school. How many children attend this school?

And how much do students pay to attend this school?

Is this an English or Amharic medium school?

Reasons

As you know, I've been talking to some of your students about the reasons that children do or do not attend school. Do you think children in Awassa want to attend school?

Why/why not?

Do you think parents in Awassa see schooling as beneficial? Why?

What prevents some children in Awassa from attending school?

Do any of these issues affect your students?

Now I'd like to ask you about your own beliefs about education, if that's ok?

Do you believe that education improves children's lives? Why?

What are the most important skills or capabilities that you want children to leave your school with?

What kind of future do you aspire to for these children?

Many of my participants have said that they go to school so that they can develop their country. Do you think education is important to Ethiopia's development?

Why?

What do you think are the best qualities of your school?

Are there any problems with your school?

What are the biggest challenges you face?

In one of our group sessions, the students discussed who makes different decisions about children's schooling. We used this chart to consider these ideas. Who do you think makes these decisions?

(chart printed on separate sheet)

Do you think that the chart you've filled represents how things should be?

Should children be involved in making decisions about their schooling, or are adults better informed to make these choices?

Reasons

Examples

Do you have any questions about my research before we finish?

As we agreed before I started working in your school, I will provide you with a summary of my findings. I will be returning in a few months to explain these conclusions to the children too. Is there anything else that you would like me to do?

Again thank you so much for your co-operation my research. These are my contact details; do you have an email address or telephone number I can contact you on if I have any more questions, and to arrange meeting when I return?

Appendix 5

Basic consent form signed by all participants in first research session attended.

I am happy to take part in Lydia's research about my experiences going to school in Hawassa. I understand that if I don't want to take part any more, I can stop at any time.

I have had the chance to ask questions about the research.

Name:

.....

Date:

.....

Age:

.....

School:

.....

Grade:

.....